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WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

SOUTH TEXAS

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD PLAN PROGRAM YEARS 2025 - 2028



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**Workforce Solutions for South Texas Comprehensive Plan Program Years
2025 - 2028**

WSST Chief Elected Officials

Chief Elected Officials	County or City Represented	Chief Elected Officials	County or City Represented
The Honorable Judge Juan Carlos Guerra	Jim Hogg County	The Honorable Judge Joseph Rathmell	Zapata County
The Honorable Mayor Dr. Victor D. Trevino	City of Laredo	The Honorable Judge Tano E. Tijerina	Webb County

WSST Board of Directors

WSST Board Member	Category Represented	WSST Board Member	Category Represented
Ms. Lupita R. Canales,	Private Sector	Dr. Alicia Carrillo	Literacy Council
Mr. Guillermo Castro	Private Sector	Mr. Hugo Chaparro	Private Sector
Mr. Jose Dodier Jr.	Private Sector	Mr. Juan Escamilla	Private Sector
Mr. Gene A. Lindgren	Economic Development	Mr. Jorge Gonzalez	Private Sector
Mr. Jose De Jesus Gonzalez	Private Sector	Ms. Mary Susan Foster	Adult Basic and Continuing Education
Mr. Elmo Daniel Lopez	Private Sector	Dr. Roger Miller	Private Sector
Mr. Paul Torres	Community Based Organization	Ms. Julie Ann Hinojosa	Community Based Organization
Mr. Enrique D. Longoria	Organized Labor	Ms. Katherine Karshis	Public Employment Agency
Mr. Ademar David Garza	Private Sector	Mr. Joe Lee Herrera	Vocational Rehabilitation
Ms. Angelica Sanchez	Education	Ms. Jessica Sifuentes	Public Assistance
Dr. Heriberto Hernandez	Education	Ms. Rosaura P. Tijerina	Private Sector
Dr. Francisca Cruz Torres	Private Sector	Dr. Miroslava B. Vargas	Private Sector
Ms. Lupita Zepeda	Private Sector	Mr. Carlos Armando De La Garza	Private Sector
Mr. Jose Antonio Torres	Private Sector		



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The Workforce Solutions for South Texas Board (WSST) is committed to implementing the Goals and Strategies that are detailed in the 2025 – 2028 Strategic Plan.

WSST, to prepare this plan and to solicit input held virtual focus groups based on targeted industry sector employers by NAICS including the Transportation, Healthcare, Education and Construction Industries. In addition, a focus group including NAICS employers from a sampling of all WSST industries was held. The Board also held a survey asking for employer input about the expectation of targeted occupations, hiring practices and career ladders. The input and consensus of the employer is reflected in the WSST Plan development.

The WSST Board ensures the public had the opportunity to provide comment on the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan. WSST placed a public notice on February 12, 2025 in the Laredo Morning Times to advise the public of the availability of the WSST Plan and opportunity to comment. The public comment period was set to begin on February 12, 2025 through February 26, 2025. A user-friendly downloadable copy of the Strategic Plan was made available on the WSST's web site.

WSST Board approved the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan at a meeting held on February 27, 2025.

The signatures below confirm the approval to submit the WSST 2025-2028 Strategic Plan was done in a legally posted open meeting.

The following signatures represent the WSST Executive Director and the current WSST Board Chairperson.

WSST Executive Director:

WSST Board Chairperson:

Rogelio Trevino

Lupita R. Canales

Typed Name

Typed Name

Executive Director

WSST Board Chairperson

Title

Title

Rogelio Trevino 2/27/2025

Lupita R. Canales
2/27/25

Signature

Date

Signature

Date

Serving Jim Hogg, Webb and Zapata Counties

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Part 1: Board Vision and Strategies

A. Vision and Goals

References: WIOA §108(b)(1)(E); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(5)

Each Board must include a description of the Board's strategic vision to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. The description must contain:

- goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including the provision of early education services and services for youth and individuals with barriers to employment as defined by WIOA §3(24); and
- goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on the performance indicators described in WIOA §116(b)(2)(A).

Minimum Plan Requirements:

- A description of the strategic vision to support regional economic growth and self-sufficiency
- Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including the provision of:
 - early education services;
 - services for youth; and
 - services for individuals with barriers to employment. WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 4
- Goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on the performance indicators described in WIOA §116(b)(2)(A)

The WSST Board serves as the designated grant recipient and administrative entity for workforce development program funds allocated to Jim Hogg, Webb, and Zapata Counties. The Board is responsible for the strategic planning, administration, oversight, and evaluation of federal and state workforce programs, encompassing employment, training, childcare, and related support services in the region.

The mission of Workforce Solutions for South Texas (WSST) is to develop a robust and responsive workforce system that meets the needs of economic development and equips the regional workforce to excel in an ever-evolving global economy.

Through its **Strategic Plan for Program Years 2025–2028**, the Board outlines a vision for a transformative workforce system in South Texas. This vision emphasizes the strategic alignment of WSST and partner resources to enhance the competitive skills and credentialing of the regional workforce, ensuring a stronger, more agile economy.

The WSST Board established the following Goals, Objectives and Strategies during the planning process, aligned to the Texas Workforce Investment Council's (TWIC) **Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031**.

TWIC Accelerating Alignment, Employers Goal: Delivery of Relevant Education and Training Programs

WSST Goal: Target classroom training and work-based learning (WBL) investments that narrow the regional skills gap and allow customers to attain marketable skills and industry recognized credentials aligned to WSST target industry sectors and career pathways.

WSST Strategies:

- Collaborate with Laredo College and other regional post-secondary institutions to develop learning opportunities that meet the current and emerging needs of local businesses.
- Collaborate with regional secondary schools to promote dual credit and career and technology education (CTE) programs.
- Coordinate service delivery with community partners to braid funding and leverage collective investments in education and training programs.
- Balance WSST training and WBL investments proportionately across target industry sectors and career pathways.
- Promote contextualized Adult Education and Literacy learning programs with Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) partners.
- Ensure local labor market information (LMI) resources are accessible electronically to job seekers, employers, and partners.
- Foster collaborations with industry stakeholders to ensure workforce training programs align with regional economic development goals and employer demand.

TWIC Accelerating Alignment, Learners Goal: Expansion of Work-Based Learning (WBL) and Apprenticeship

WSST Goal: Engage regional employers and education partners to expand work-based learning (WBL) opportunities available for customers to enter target industry sectors and career pathways.

WSST Strategies:

- Partner with Department of Labor representatives and employers to advocate for expansion apprenticeship and pre-Apprenticeship training programs in the region.
- Increase utilization of apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship services with WSST funding and increase employer engagement.
- Increase utilization of on-the-job training (OJT) services with WSST funding.
- Promote early high school work study programs to learn essential skills while attending school.
- Enhance partnerships with regional secondary and post-secondary institutions to develop work-based learning opportunities in WSST target sectors and career pathways. An example is our partnership with Laredo College to enhance availability of WBL opportunities including

Capstone Projects, Cooperative Education (Co-Op), Job Shadowing, and Clinical Observations for their students as well as workforce center customers.

- Partner with TWC Vocational Rehabilitation to offer WBL opportunities with accommodations for individuals with disabilities.

TWIC Accelerating Alignment, Partners Goal: Alignment to Support Career Pathways

WSST Goal: Increase opportunities for entry into WSST target career pathways through local community partners and secondary and post-secondary education institutions.

WSST Strategies:

- Promote WSST target career pathways programming by community partners and education institutions through presentations, facilitated discussions, and collateral materials to partners.
- Develop strong memoranda of understanding (MOU) partnerships with literacy and education agencies that promote career pathway education through contextualized learning.
- Develop career pathways collateral materials that engage regional targets and hard to serve populations, including job seekers with basic skill deficiencies and employment barriers.
- Provide training and technical assistance to education institutions on the changing needs of job seekers and employers.
- Promote the importance of early childhood education with South Texas childcare providers and employers and expand Texas Rising Star certifications,

TWIC Accelerating Alignment, Policy and Planning Goal: Relevant Data Sets WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 21

WSST Goal: Use workforce system data to improve efficiency and effectiveness while ensuring programs align with labor market needs.

Strategies:

- Leverage data analytics to monitor WSST program performance and inform strategic decision making for workforce investments.
- Conduct regular evaluations of employment trends and workforce program outcomes to identify areas for improvement and innovation.
- Collaborate with partners to ensure data-sharing agreements facilitate streamlined service delivery and support co-enrollment opportunities.
- Provide real-time labor market insights to employers, job seekers, and community stakeholders to drive evidence-based decision-making.

B. Board Strategies

References: WIOA §108(b)(1)(F); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(6)); Boards must provide a description of their strategies to work with the partners that carry out Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) activities to align the resources available to the local workforce development area (workforce area) to achieve the Boards' vision and goals.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of the Board's strategies to work with the entities carrying out AEL and VR to align:

- resources available to achieve vision and goals

Core programs:

- Adult Education and Literacy activities
- Vocational Rehabilitation services

WSST employs proven strategies to align Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) resources with our vision and goals. By fostering collaborative relationships with these key partners, WSST ensures seamless service delivery and maximizes the impact of these critical programs for job seekers and employers.

Adult Education and Literacy (AEL): AEL services are provided to the South Texas region by Laredo College (LC), via contract the TWC. Successful strategies WSST has implemented to coordinate with and align efforts with our AEL partner include:

- Strategic Planning and Advising: WSST actively participates in regional planning and serve in an advisory capacity to LC. Regular joint planning sessions help align AEL resources and efforts with WSST's vision and goals, foster co-enrollment and service coordination, and align performance metrics from both systems.
- Contextualized Learning Models: WSST coordinates with LC to provide referrals for customers to contextualized workforce preparation skills classes that integrate workforce training with foundational education and remediation services, ensuring participants gain skills that directly support employment goals.
- Joint Outreach Campaigns: WSST and LC conduct collaborative outreach campaigns to raise awareness among job seekers and employers about the comprehensive services available through the partnership.

Vocational Rehabilitation: WSST collaborates with TWC's Vocational Rehabilitation Services to coordinate service delivery and implement joint service strategies that efficiently provide services customers with disabilities. Successful strategies WSST has implemented to coordinate with our VR partners include:

- Paid-Work Experience (PWE): Through a fee-for-service contract, WSST facilitates Paid Work Experience placements for VR participants, including students with disabilities identified in their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). This program provides meaningful work opportunities and wage services, supporting the workforce transition for eligible students.
- Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL): WSST partners with VR to place youth with disabilities into subsidized employment during the summer. The program offers youth the opportunity to learn essential work skills while introducing them to WSST industry sector and career pathway opportunities
- Collocated VR Staff: VR staff are located within each of our two WSST workforce centers. Staff are fully integrated into center operations allowing for:
 - (1) streamlined intake process and referral systems between center and VR staff,
 - (2) cross-training of VR staff on WSST programs and vice versa, enabling all staff to make informed referrals and promote co-enrollment for customers, and
 - (3) Co-enrollment in VR and WSST programs ensuring customers receive comprehensive wraparound support.

By implementing these strategies, WSST ensures that AEL and VR resources are effectively aligned to meet the Board’s vision and goals, while providing comprehensive services to these key target populations.

C. High-Performing Board

References: WIOA §108(b)(18); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(17)

Boards must include a description of the actions each Board will take toward becoming or remaining a high-performing Board, consistent with the factors developed by the Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC).

Minimum Plan Requirements:

- Actions a Board will take to become or remain a high-performing Board

WSST has a history of working collaboratively with community partners to maximize the impact of valuable workforce development resources and improve accessibility to opportunities for residents. Our Board Goals and Strategies are implemented in alignment with the TWIC Goals to:

- Focus on Employers,
- Engage in Partnerships,
- Align System Elements, and
- Improve and Integrate Programs.

Targeted actions WSST will take to continue performing at a high-level, include:

- Effectively engage our Board of Directors in strategic planning and advocacy activities that expand the opportunities available to area businesses and job seekers.
- Joint planning and coordination with WIOA priority partners to remove barriers to services for area customers and efficiently braid funding.
- Partner with Laredo College and other area training providers to improve the training options available via the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).
- Pursue additional funding opportunities to broaden the workforce support and services available to customers in South Texas, including applying to local, state, and federal solicitations.
- Partner with regional economic development corporations (EDCs) to support community development strategies with human capital investments.

In addition to the strategies identified above, WSST will continue to work with our Board of Directors and community partners to innovate, improve accessibility to services throughout the region, and optimize the resources available to remain a high-performing Board.

Part 2. Economic and Workforce Analysis

A. Regional Economic and Employment Needs Analysis

References: WIOA §108(b)(1)(A); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(1); WIOA §108(b)(1)(B); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(2); WD Letter 24-20, Change 1 Boards must include a regional analysis of the following:

- Economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations

Economic Conditions in South Texas

The South Texas three-county region is a vibrant border area that plays a critical role in the economy of both Texas and the broader U.S.-Mexico region. Economic development in South Texas has been shaped by its strategic location along the U.S.-Mexico border, making it a key hub for trade, and logistics. Laredo Port is one of the busiest land ports of entry in the U.S., with the Laredo International Bridge serving as a major point of connection for cross-border trade.

Transportation and Warehousing (NAICS 48-49) will continue to be the largest industry employer in the Workforce Solutions for the South Texas workforce area. According to WorldCity and the City of Laredo analysis in November 2024, the latest import/export data for Port Laredo showed a combined 28.6 billion dollars. Port Laredo is ranked No. 1 by value among the nation's roughly 450-plus airports, seaports and border crossings and No. 2 for total trade among nations.

<https://ustradenumbers.com/port/port-laredo/>

The workforce is projected to increase by thousands of job opportunities with the Walker Family Talise project, a 7-billion-dollar investment multi-use 13-000-acre development project that will incorporate both residential and commercial land use. The project masterplan shows 34 million square feet of warehouse industrial space with multimodal components that will be built in multiple phases, the first phase has begun with 3.8 million square feet of warehouse and distribution space. The project includes a 600-megawatt power generation facility and tests have found water on the land that could supply the colonias and be another source of water for Laredo. <https://www.lmtonline.com/local/article/talise-laredo-webb-family-legacy-leaders-react-19477490.php>

The port district's infrastructure includes railroads, highways, and warehouses, making Laredo a key logistics and transportation hub. The city of Laredo, in 2024 issued \$469,704,765 in Warehouse/Industrial construction permits which is a 33.26 % increase when compared to 2023 when \$313,485,552 was spent on Warehousing expansions or new construction.

<https://www.laredoedc.org/site-selection/economic-indicators/>

The Laredo area has approximately 41+ million sq. ft. of logistical and distribution space, in 2021, according to the U.S. Census Bureau data analyzed by World City in Laredo:

- Approximately 5,546,5757 trucks crossed the border in 2022 north and southbound
- 1 Rail Bridge and 4 vehicle bridges: 2 for commercial, 3 for private vehicles
- Goods shipped through Laredo travel to more than 60 countries

<https://www.laredoedc.org/site-selection/economic-indicators/>

The Kansas City Southern (KSA) investment that began in 2022 with a \$100 million investment has been completed and has built a second span of the International Railway Bridge across the Rio Grande. The project doubles the capacity to move freight through the border, 1,150-foot structure has been built 35 feet from the current bridge, keeping Port Laredo at the center of North American Trade. <https://www.cpkcr.com/en/media/Laredo-bridge-completion-2024>

The real estate market in Laredo has seen growth, particularly in residential development, driven by the city's growing population. Total building permits issued by the city of Laredo in 2024 was \$1,359,377,925 a 42.89% increase when compared to 2023 at \$776,258,598 total building permits issued. <https://www.laredoedc.org/site-selection/economic-indicators/>

The South Texas workforce region has a significant retail market, bolstered by a combination of cross-border shopping and local demand. The city's retail economy has been expanding with new shopping centers, restaurants, and services to accommodate both locals and cross-border visitors. <https://www.visitlaredo.com/businesses/shopping/malls--plazas>

Healthcare services are a growing sector, with Laredo serving as a medical hub for residents in both the U.S. and northern Mexico. The South Texas region has seen investments in new medical facilities, medical schools and services, and the sector continues to expand to meet the needs of its growing population. <https://medicine.tamu.edu/degrees/md/international.html>

Educational institutions including Texas A&M International University and Laredo College contribute to the local economy, particularly through research, development, and the preparation of a skilled workforce. The education sector, one of the largest South Texas employers provides jobs and attracts students, many of whom stay in Laredo to contribute to the economy.<http://texascenter.tamtu.edu/pdf/EIA/FY2024-TAMTU-EIA.pdf>

Overall, South Texas's economic development is closely tied to its role as a border city with a strong international trade network, as well as its logistics, education, health and retail sectors. The city continues to evolve with new investments in infrastructure, technology, and education, positioning itself as a dynamic economic hub in South Texas.

Existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations

Workforce Solutions for South Texas region's workforce will continue to grow according to TWC data which indicates collectively industries employed 116,127 persons in 2022 and are projecting to increase employment by 11.0% or 12,730 jobs to 128,857 jobs by 2032.

Trade, Transportation, and Utilities (21) is projected to increase by 3,962 jobs to 37,506 employed persons by 2032 and will continue to be the largest industry employer in the South Texas workforce region hiring 29.10% of total employment.

The Education and Health Services Industry (25), the 2nd largest employer in the South Texas workforce region is estimated to increase employment by 3,127 to 35,463 jobs by 2032 representing 27.52% of the workforce.

The 3rd largest industry employer is the Leisure and Hospitality Industry (26) which TWC data indicates will have an increased employment change of 2,753 to 14,247 persons employed by 2032, representing 11.05% of total employment in the South Texas workforce region.

The Professional and Business Service Industry (24) is the 4th largest employer projecting to employ 10,823 persons by 2032, an increase of 1,789 persons from 2022. The industry is estimated to employ 8.39% of the South Texas workforce in 2032. The Public Administration Industry, meanwhile, is projected to employ 10,566 persons by 2032 representing 8.19% of the workforce in South Texas.

Projection data provided by TWC, indicates all but one industry sector has some positive percentage of growth projected between the years 2022 – 2032, Natural Resources and Mining is projected to decrease 10.62% or -167 jobs by 2032 employing 1,405, 1.09% of the South Texas workforce. (see Table 6)

In WSST's current and emerging in-demand occupations, per TWC projections shown in Table 8, Office & Administrative Support Occupations (43-0000) will have the largest estimated number

of employees in South Texas in 2022 at 17,391 and are projected to increase by 484 jobs to 17,875 by 2032.

Transportation and Material Moving Occupations (53-0000) are projecting a 17.18% increase in employment or 2,592 more jobs by 2032 to remain the 2nd largest category of occupations at 17,675 employees.

Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations the 3rd largest occupational category and are projected to increase by 2,598 employees by 2032, while the Healthcare Support Occupations the 4th largest type of occupations will increase by 1,710 to 12,131 employees.

Legal Occupations (23-0000) are projected to decrease slightly by -12 employees by 2032 to an estimated total of 472 jobs. The Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations held 890 jobs in 2022 and are also projecting a decrease to 842 jobs in 2032. (see Table 8)

- Employment needs of employers, including the knowledge and skills needed to meet such employment needs, within in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 5

Employment Needs

To better determine employer occupational skill expectation, WSST conducted online surveys and several interviews that resulted with more than 200 employers from different industry-sectors providing feedback during the planning process. To ensure a representative sample of targeted industry sectors contributed, the TWC Employer list by NAICS published by TWC was utilized as the source for employer outreach.

Employer interview results indicated a convergence of factors that contribute to the staffing challenges they are facing when hiring qualified labor. Some employers responded that longevity of employment is a major concern citing it as “job abandonment”, while other employer consensus included comments that many job seekers do not have real work world experience, poor work ethic, lack job readiness skills, critical thinking skills and have inadequate communication skills.

Other examples of needed skills cited by employers include computer technology skills, a need for fork-lift certifications, Microsoft office certifications, customer service, communication skills, critical soft skills and knowledge about import and export laws and regulations. The following discussion summarizes additional survey and interview feedback received from employers in specific industry sectors:

(23) Construction

NAICS 2382 Building Equipment Contractor employers verified the need for HVAC, warehouse, distribution and customer service occupations. HVAC and helpers must have a license with the Texas Department of Licensing, legal status, experience and pass a background check. The

constant manufacturing changes to refrigeration units require specialized training for current staff which affects the cost of operations along with the training required for incumbent staff to comply with all changes in laws and regulations. The industry employees expressed the HVAC occupation will always be in demand because of the high heat in South Texas; however, the biggest challenge of working along the border area is that more competitive prices are available from workers residing in Nuevo Laredo.

(44) Retail Trade

NAICS 4411 Automobile Dealer employers expressed the need for Cargo and Freight Agents, and Shipping and Receiving, Inventory Clerks. Industry employers require a high school diploma and be computer literate, have good customer service and verbal communication skills. Employers surveyed are planning to hire more staff and are projecting growth in the Automobile Dealer Industry.

(48/49) Transportation and Warehousing

NAICS 4885 Freight Transportation Arrangement and NAICS 4931 Warehousing and Storage employers when asked to share skills or training needed to meet the company's skill expectation included a proficiency in logistics software (e.g., TMS, WMS), strong organizational and multitasking abilities, excellent communication and negotiation skills, problem-solving, decision-making aptitude and knowledge about import and export laws and regulations.

(54) Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services

The Customs Brokerage and Warehousing /Logistics employers (NAICS 5416) that participated in the survey validated the need for Cargo and Freight Agents, Shipping Receiving and Inventory Clerks, CDL/Hazmat Drivers, and Forklift Operators. Employers in this industry since COVID have noticed a decline of CDL drivers wanting to work or changing occupations. They expressed the need for job seekers to have customer service skills, computer skills (Microsoft Office products), to be forklift operation certified, and have knowledge of importing and exporting and customs and border crossings. NAICS 5416 employers also expressed the challenge for the needed trained skills may be compounded because the Transportation Warehouse Industry continues to expand, and the younger labor force does not have the job readiness skills to enter the workforce.

NAICS 5412 (Accounting, Tax Preparation, Bookkeeping, and Payroll Services) expressed Artificial Intelligence may affect the industry in the future regarding replacing an in-person process. Employers did validate the need for Accountants and Bookkeepers; however, they also expressed that some job seekers do not have enough hands-on training and experience after they graduate and prefer to work from home. The NAICS 5412 industry employers also expressed the need for technology skills, tax laws, and accounting knowledge.

(56) Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Service

NAICS 5613 Employment Services industry employers see more need for Cargo and Freight Agents, and Shipping, Receiving and Inventory Clerk occupations. The employers in this industry find it challenging to find qualified job seekers that are forklift certified, have computer skills,

knowledge of Microsoft Office products, good communication (verbal) skills and have the appropriate workforce soft skills.

(621) Ambulatory Health Care Services

NAICS 6211, 6213, 6216, 6219 Ambulatory Health Care Industry employers expressed a need for Physical Therapy Assistants, Radiologic Technologists and Technicians, and Medical Assistants with certifications and required licenses. Computer skill levels needed vary depending on the occupation, job seekers need to be bilingual, have good customer service skills and knowledge of the health insurance and reimbursement requirements. Industry employers surveyed expressed a high turnover creating a continuous need for staff.

(624) Social Assistance

NAICS 6244 Childcare Services employers surveyed verified the need for Pre-School Teachers and Teacher Assistants. Job seekers must have a high school diploma, CPR and food handler's certification, first aid, CVA, and be computer literate. Industry employers also expressed there is a large staff turnover and felt the wages paid needed to increase; however, the number of children enrolled determines the salary. In addition, employers expressed the challenge of maintaining enrollment numbers has been affected by school districts accepting the same child age-group.

(81) Other Services

NAICS 8111 Automotive Repair and Maintenance employers expressed a need for Office and Inventory Clerks, Welders, Lube Technicians and Mechanics. Mechanics and Technicians need to hold training certifications, have experience in the automotive repair industry and be computer literate. Industry employers surveyed plan on hiring more staff. Employers pointed to the shift to repair electric vehicles will affect training for the automotive repair industry.

Knowledge and Skills

Looking at the targeted occupations to analyze specific knowledge and skill requirements provides further insight into the demand the projected targeted occupational growth will place on the WSST labor market. Table 1 details the collective frequency of occurrence of the top five Knowledge and Skills for the twenty-three WSST Target Occupations. WSST extrapolated from O-NET, the top five knowledge base and top five skill areas for each of the targeted occupations. Analysis of the top five primary knowledge areas that are in common for the targeted occupations reveals there are 19 of the occupations that require a command of the English Language, 18 of the twenty-three target occupations require knowledge of Customer and Personal Service and 9 require knowledge of Mathematics.

The analysis in Table 1 also shows that Skill requirements for 18 of the WSST Target Occupations will require Active Listening skills, while 16 require individuals to have adequate speaking skills. Fourteen of the target occupations require Critical Thinking skills while 13 require individuals to have Reading Comprehension skills.

Table 1: Target Occupations Knowledge and Skills

Knowledge	Frequency of Occurrence	Skills	Frequency of Occurrence
English Language	19	Active Listening	18
Customer and Personal Service	18	Speaking	16
Mathematics	9	Critical Thinking	14
Administration and Management	8	Reading Comprehension	13
Computers and Electronics	7	Monitoring	7
Education and Training	7	Negotiation	6
Psychology	7	Social Perceptiveness	5
Medicine and Dentistry	6	Instructing	5
Mechanical	5	Troubleshooting	5
Public Safety and Security	4	Coordination	4
Building and Construction	4	Service Orientation	4
Transportation	3	Learning Strategies	4
Design	3	Repairing	4
Production and Processing	2	Judgment and Decision Making	3
Economics and Accounting	2	Active Learning	3
Philosophy and Theology	1	Operation Monitoring	3
Therapy and Counseling	1	Complex Problem Solving	2
Engineering and Technology	1	Installation	1
Law and Government	1	Operation and Control	1
Geography	1	Systems Evaluation	1
Telecommunications	1	Equipment Maintenance	1

Source: O-NET - My Next Move

There are six target occupations that are identified as Construction; Transportation; Warehousing; Wholesale Trade; Maintenance; and Repair. Table 2 below shows the top five common Knowledge requirements for the six occupations which are Mechanical, Customer and Personal Services, Building and Construction, Mathematics and Design. Top skills required for the six target occupations include Critical Thinking Skills, Troubleshooting, Repairing and Operation Monitoring.

Table 2: Construction/Wholesale Trade/Maintenance and Repair

TARGET OCCUPATIONS - Construction/Wholesale Trade/Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters 47-2152	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics. 49-3023	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers 49-9021	Bus & Truck Mechanics & Diesel Engine Specialists 49-3031	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers. 53-3032	Electrician 47-2111	Frequency of Occurrence
TOP 5 KNOWLEDGE AREAS - CONSTRUCTION/WHOLESALE TRADE/MAINTENANCE, AND REPAIR - WSST 6 OF 23 TARGET OCCUPATIONS							
Mechanical	1	1	1	1		1	5
Customer and Personal Service	1	1	1		1		4
Building and Construction	1	1	1			1	4
Mathematics	1	1				1	3
Design	1	1				1	3
English Language				1	1		2
Transportation				1	1		2
Engineering and Technology			1				2
Public Safety and Security				1	1		2
Administration and Management						1	1
Computers and Electronics			1				1
Education and Training				1			1
Law and Government					1		1
TOP 5 SKILLS AREAS - 6 OF 23 WSST TARGET OCCUPATIONS							
Critical Thinking Skill	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Troubleshooting	1	1	1	1		1	5
Repairing	1	1		1		1	4
Operation Monitoring			1	1	1		3
Reading Comprehension			1		1		2
Monitoring		1			1		2
Speaking	1					1	2
Active Listening	1					1	2
Judgement and Decision Making		1					1
Installation			1				1
Operation and Control					1		1
Equipment Maintenance				1			1

Source: O-NET TOP 5 KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

There are four target occupations that are identified as Educational Services Occupations, the Table 3 below shows the top five common Knowledge and Skills for occupations. The top five common Knowledge requirements for the four occupations are command of the English Language, Psychology, Education and Training and Customer and Personal Services. Top skills required for the four education target occupations include Active Listening, Speaking, Instructing and Learning Strategies skills.

Table: 3: Education, Training and Library Occupations

TARGET OCCUPATIONS EDUCATION, TRAINING & LIBRARY OCCUPATIONS	PreSchool Teachers 25-2011	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Ed.25-2021	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education 25-2022	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education 25-2031	Frequency of Occurrence
TOP 5 KNOWLEDGE AREAS - EDUCATION, TRAINING & LIBRARY OCCUPATIONS - WSST 4 OF 23 TARGET OCCUPATIONS					
English Language	1	1	1	1	4
Psychology	1	1	1	1	4
Education and Training	1	1	1	1	4
Customer and Personal Service	1	1		1	3
Mathematics		1	1		2
Computers and Electronics				1	1
Public Safety and Security	1				1
Philosophy			1		1
TARGET OCCUPATIONS EDUCATION, TRAINING & LIBRARY OCCUPATIONS	PreSchool Teachers 25-2011	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Ed.25-2021	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education 25-2022	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education 25-2031	Frequency of Occurrence
TOP 5 SKILLS AREAS - EDUCATION, TRAINING & LIBRARY OCCUPATIONS - WSST 4 OF 23 TARGET OCCUPATIONS					
Active Listening	1	1	1	1	4
Speaking	1	1	1	1	4
Instructing	1	1	1	1	4
Learning Strategies	1	1	1	1	4
Reading Comprehension				1	1
Critical Thinking		1			1
Coordination	1				1
Active Learning			1		1
Source: O-NET TOP 5 KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS					

There are seven target occupations that are identified as Office Management Occupations, the Table 4 below shows the top five common Knowledge and Skills for the occupations. The top knowledge area for the seven occupations in the Office Mgmt. category is the English Language and Customer and Personal Service skills. All the seven occupations will require the employee to have Active Listening, Speaking and Reading and Comprehension skills.

Table 4: Office/Mgmt./Business/Computer Target Occupations

TARGET OCCUPATIONS	Medical Secretaries 43-6013	Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks 43-5071	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks 43-3031	Cargo and Freight Agents 43-5011	Computer User Support Specialists 15-1232	Accountants and Auditors 13-2011	General and Operations Managers 11-1021	Frequency of Occurrence
TOP 5 KNOWLEDGE AREAS - OFFICE/MGMT/BUSINESS/COMPUTER - WSST 7 OF 23 TARGET OCCUPATIONS								
English Language	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Customer and Personal Service	1		1		1	1	1	5
Mathematics		1	1			1	1	4
Administrative and Mgmt				1		1	1	3
Administrative	1	1	1					3
Computer and Electronics	1	1			1			3
Economics and Accounting			1			1		2
Production and Processing		1					1	2
Public Safety and Security				1				1
Medicine and Dentistry	1							1
Transportation				1				1
Geography				1				1
Education and Training					1			1
Telecommunication					1			1
TARGET OCCUPATIONS	Medical Secretaries 43-6013	Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks 43-5071	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks 43-3031	Cargo and Freight Agents 43-5011	Computer User Support Specialists 15-1232	Accountants and Auditors 13-2011	General and Operations Managers 11-1021	Frequency of Occurrence
TOP 5 SKILL AREAS - OFFICE/MGMT/BUSINESS/COMPUTER - WSST 7 OF 23 TARGET OCCUPATIONS								
Active Listening	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Speaking	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Reading Comprehension	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Critical Thinking		1	1	1	1	1		5
Monitoring		1					1	2
Complex Problem Solving	1				1			2
Service Orientation	1							1
Coordination							1	1
Judgement and Decision Making						1		1
Negotiation				1				1
Mathematics			1					1

Source: O-NET TOP 5 KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

There are six target occupations that are identified as Health Care Practitioners & Technical Occupations, the Table 5 shows the top collective Knowledge and Skills for the occupations. The top knowledge area is the English Language and Customer and Personal Service for all six target occupations. All six of the target healthcare occupations will require the employee to have Active Listening skills followed by social perceptiveness.

Table 5: Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occupations

TARGET OCCUPATIONS Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occupations	Medical Assistants 31-9092	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians 29-2034	Dental Assistants 31-9091	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses 29-2061	Registered Nurses 29-1141	Physical Therapist Assistants 31-2021	Frequency of Occurrence
TOP 5 KNOWLEDGE AREAS - HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONERS & TECHNICAL OCCUPATIONS WSST 6 OF 23 TARGET OCCUPATIONS							
English Language	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Customer and Personal Service	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Medicine and Dentistry Techniques to Diagnose and Treat	1	1	1	1	1		5
Administrative and Mgmt		1	1	1	1		4
Psychology				1	1	1	3
Computers and Electronics	1	1					2
Administrative	1		1				2
Education and Training						1	1
Therapy and Counseling						1	1
TARGET OCCUPATIONS Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occupations	Medical Assistants 31-9092	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians 29-2034	Dental Assistants 31-9091	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses 29-2061	Registered Nurses 29-1141	Physical Therapist Assistants 31-2021	Frequency of Occurrence
TOP 5 SKILL AREAS - HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONERS & TECHNICAL OCCUPATIONS WSST 6 OF 23 TARGET OCCUPATIONS							
Active Listening	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Social Perceptiveness	1	1		1	1	1	5
Speaking	1	1	1			1	4
Service Orientation		1		1	1		3
Reading Comprehension	1	1	1				3
Coordination				1	1		2
Monitoring				1		1	2
Critical Thinking	1				1		2
Active Learning			1			1	2
Instructing			1				1
Source: O-NET TOP 5 KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS							

Minimum Plan Requirements:

An analysis of the economic conditions that includes the following:

- Existing in-demand industry sectors
- Emerging in-demand industry sectors
- Existing in-demand occupations
- Emerging in-demand occupations
- Target occupations

A description of employer employment needs, including the knowledge and skills needed to meet such employer’s needs, within the following:

- Existing in-demand industry sectors
- Emerging in-demand industry sectors
- Existing in-demand occupations
- Emerging in-demand occupations
- Target occupations

The Board must include its In-Demand Industries List, In-Demand Occupations List, and Target Occupations List

Note: As appropriate, a workforce area may use an existing analysis, if it provides a current and accurate description of the regional economy.

TWC’s LMI industry growth projections (two-digit NAICS) for the period 2022-2032 were utilized to ascertain which industries were projected to have the largest increase in estimated employment in the Workforce Solutions for the South Texas region. TWC estimated employment projections for 2022-2032, found in Table 6 indicate the Trade, transportation, and utilities industry (21) will increase by 3,962 new employees, Education and health services (25) is estimated to increase by 3,127 jobs and the Leisure and hospitality industry (26) will have an increased employment change of 2,753 by 2032.

Table 6: Existing and Emerging Industry Projected Employment

NAICS Code	Industry Title	Estimated Employment (2022)	Projected Employment (2032)	Change in Employment
1021	Trade, transportation and utilities	33,544	37,506	3,962
1025	Education and health services	32,336	35,463	3,127
1026	Leisure and hospitality	11,494	14,247	2,753
1024	Professional and business services	9,034	10,823	1,789
1028	Public administration	10,282	10,566	284
000067	Self employed workers, all Jobs	7,065	7,337	272
1027	Other services	3,484	3,878	394
1023	Financial activities	3,619	3,723	104
1012	Construction	2,225	2,363	138
1011	Natural resources and mining	1,572	1,405	-167
1013	Manufacturing	852	915	63
1022	Information	620	631	11
		116,127	128,857	12,730

Source: TWC Staffing Patterns

Utilizing TWC and drilling down to the 4-digit NAICS, WSST selected fourteen In-Demand Industries based on number of employees, projected growth and the types of occupations the industry employs. Targeted in-demand industries include 2382 Building Equipment Contractors, 4411 Automobile Dealers, 4885 Freight Transportation Arrangement, 4931 Warehousing and Storage, 5412 Accounting tax preparation, bookkeeping and payroll service, 5415 Computer Systems Design and Related Services, 5416 Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services, 5613 Employment Services, 6211 Offices of Physicians, 6214 Outpatient Care Centers, 6216 Home Health Care Services, 6241 Individual and Family Services, 6244 Child Care Services and 8111 Automotive Repair and Maintenance. The targeted in-demand industries are estimated to increase by 5,203 jobs by 2032 representing 40.87% of overall South Texas employment projected growth in employment (12,730).

Table 7: Targeted In-Demand Industries

Industry Code	Industry Title	Annual Average Employment 2022	Annual Average Employment 2032	Number Change 2022-2032	Percent Change 2022-2032
10	Total, All Industries	116,127	128,857	12,730	11.0
2382	Building Equipment Contractors	798	996	198	24.8
4411	Automobile Dealers	817	898	81	9.9
4885	Freight Transportation Arrangement	6,747	7,585	838	12.4
4931	Warehousing and Storage	1,492	1,932	440	29.5
5412	Accounting tax preparation, bookkeeping and payroll service	444	460	16	3.6
5415	Computer Systems Design and Related Services	87	114	27	31.0
5416	Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services	1,226	1,544	318	25.9
5613	Employment Services	3,096	3,965	869	28.1
6211	Offices of Physicians	1,668	2,165	497	29.8
6214	Outpatient Care Centers	635	769	134	21.1
6216	Home Health Care Services	6,055	6,248	193	3.2
6241	Individual and Family Services	3,827	4,977	1,150	30.0
6244	Child Care Services	756	902	146	19.3
8111	Automotive Repair and Maintenance	1,024	1,320	296	28.9
Source: TWC LMI Industry Projections		28,672	33,875	5,203	15.35%

Existing and Emerging In-Demand Occupations

Per TWC Labor Market projection data shown in Table 8, the WSST workforce area's 2022-2032 workforce growth occupational category of employment shows the area's projected employment is estimated to increase to 128,857, 12,730 more jobs by 2032.

WSST's Office & Administrative Support Occupations (43-0000) had the largest estimated number of employees in 2022 at 17,391 and are projected to increase by 484 jobs to 17,875 by 2032.

Transportation and Material Moving Occupations are projecting a 17.18% increase in employment or 2,592 more jobs by 2032 to remain the 2nd largest category of occupations at 17,552 employees.

Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations the 3rd largest occupations are projected to increase by 2,598 employees by 2032, while the Healthcare Support Occupations the 4th largest type of occupations will increase by 1,710 to 12,131 employees

The Legal Occupations (23-0000) are projected to have a slight decrease of -12 employees by 2032 to an estimated total of 472 jobs. The Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations held 890 jobs in 2022 and are also projected to decrease to 842 jobs in 2032.

Table 8: Existing and Emerging In-Demand Occupations

In-Demand Occupations

In-Demand Occupations are occupations that are currently experiencing a high demand for workers due to factors like market trends, economic conditions, or demographic shifts. These occupations typically have a lot of job openings, and employers are actively seeking candidates with the necessary skills. Characteristics of In-Demand Occupations include High number of job openings often due to rapid growth in certain industries or sectors. In-Demand occupations

may include both entry-level and specialized roles can be temporary or long-term depending on the industry, they often result from technological advancements, societal changes, or shifts in the economy. WSST selected 61 in-demand occupations based on TWC 2022-2032 projection of employment growth. The sixty-one occupations are estimated to have 71,998 jobs in 2022 and are projected to grow by 9,908 jobs to 81,896 jobs by 2032.

Using TWC LMI data, the in-demand occupations were selected based on highest annual average employment projected for 2032, percent of growth, total annual openings, median hourly wage is over \$10.00, transferable skills/career path opportunities, staffing patterns, and number of employees.

Table 9: In-Demand Occupations

Occ Code	Occupational Title	Annual Average Employment 2022	Annual Average Employment 2032	Number Change 2022-2032
00-0000	Total, All Occupations	116,127	128,857	12,730
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	3,279	3,747	468
11-3012	Administrative Services Managers	147	166	19
11-3071	Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	455	563	108
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	317	426	109
11-9199	Managers, All Other	1,349	1,450	101
13-1041	Compliance Officers	1,485	1,602	117
13-1081	Logisticians	174	250	76
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	578	635	57
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	294	314	20
15-1252	Software Developers	147	208	61
21-2021	Child, Family, and School Social Workers	215	234	19
25-2011	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	468	524	56
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	1,883	1,957	74
25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	921	957	36
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	1,282	1,337	55
25-9045	Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	1,378	1,435	57
25-9099	Educational Instruction and Library Workers, All Other	432	451	19
29-1141	Registered Nurses	1,622	1,763	141
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	106	125	19
29-2042	Emergency Medical Technicians	125	144	19
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	227	280	53
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	567	619	52
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	8,469	9,793	1,324
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	739	811	72
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	102	131	29
31-9091	Dental Assistants	205	256	51
31-9092	Medical Assistants	546	714	168
33-3021	Detectives and Criminal Investigators	1,745	1,853	108
33-9032	Security Guards	720	916	196
35-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	998	1,294	296
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	979	1,464	485
35-2021	Food Preparation Workers	1,542	1,798	256
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	2,999	3,785	786
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	1,573	1,874	301
35-9011	Dining Room and Cafeteria Attendants and Bartender Helpers	364	467	103
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1,560	1,702	142
39-9011	Childcare Workers	700	793	93
41-2011	Cashiers	3,009	3,368	359
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	3,060	3,169	109
41-3091	Sales Representatives of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services	509	564	55
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	1,321	1,363	42
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	2,629	2,685	56
43-5011	Cargo and Freight Agents	885	1,051	166
43-5032	Dispatchers, Except Police, Fire, and Ambulance	519	585	66
43-5071	Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks	1,733	1,848	115
43-6013	Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	414	491	77
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	2,354	2,406	52
47-2111	Electricians	252	316	64
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	180	216	36
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	698	807	109
49-3031	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	491	562	71
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	144	175	31
51-9061	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	227	246	19
53-3031	Driver/Sales Workers	689	829	140
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	5,253	6,208	955
53-3033	Light Truck Drivers	822	998	176
53-7051	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	1,261	1,539	278
53-7061	Cleaners of Vehicles and Equipment	438	541	103
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	2,101	2,513	412
53-7064	Packers and Packagers, Hand	530	602	72
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	1,777	1,976	199
Source: TWC LMI		71,988	81,896	9,908

Target Occupations

Target occupations are occupations strategically selected for specific focus on future growth potential, and alignment with employer occupational demand. Target occupations are eligible for workforce Individual Training Account funds.

WSST, to select the target occupations performed an analysis and selected the occupations based on projected growth, number of employees, education, career ladders and wages. The data was used and shared with employers during the survey phase where they were asked to validate the occupations in their industry staffing patterns. Nineteen of the previous 20 targeted occupations remain on the list, the Emergency Medical Technician was removed. Local wisdom and surveying the childcare industry, the Pre-School Teacher was added, this industry provides a crucial need for the worker, it is a significant employer and economic development contributor. The Radiologic Technologists, and Technicians, and Physical Therapist Assistants were added to the list, local employers and training providers input and knowledge indicated a demand for these two occupations. Plumbers, Pipefitters and Steamfitters were added because of the projected construction need for the upcoming Walker Family Talise project, a 7-billion-dollar investment multi-use 13-000-acre development project.

The WSST 23 targeted occupations found in Table 10 are categorized in the following Occupational Titles: Management Occupations Business and Financial Operations Occupations **(General and Operations Mgrs. and Accountants and Auditors)**, Computer and Mathematical Occupations **(Computer User Support Specialists)**, Education, Training & Library Occupations **(Pre-School Teachers, Except Special Education, Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education, Middle School Teachers Except Special Education and Career/Technical Education, Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education)**, Healthcare

Practitioners and Technical Occupations (Registered Nurses, Radiologic Technologists, and Technicians, Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses, Physical Therapist Assistants, Dental Assistants and Medical Assistants), Office and Administrative Support Occupations (Bookkeeping, Accounting and Auditing Clerks, Cargo and Freight Agents, Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks, Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants), and Construction, Wholesale Trade, Maintenance and Repair Occupations (Electricians, Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters, Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics, bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists, Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers, and Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers).

Table 10 below, shows WSST’s 23 Targeted Occupations, which in 2022 was estimated at 23,224 positions or 20.43% of the total 113,627 estimated occupational positions in the WSST workforce area (see Table 8 above). The WSST’s 23 targeted occupations listed in Table 10 are projected to grow by 2,892 (11.07%) new positions by 2032, which represents 22.85% of the total 12,654 projected growth by 2032 for employment in the WSST workforce area.

Table 10: WSST Target Occupations

SOC Code	Occupational Title	Annual Average Employment 2022	Annual Average Employment 2032	Number Change 2022-2032	Percent Change 2022-2032	Total Annual Openings
Management Occupations						
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	3,279	3,747	468	14.3	324
Business & Financial Operation Occupations						
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	578	635	57	9.9	53
Computer and Mathematical Occupations						
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	294	314	20	6.8	22
Education, Training & Library Occupations						
25-2011	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	468	524	56	12.0	58
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	1,883	1,957	74	3.9	134
25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	921	957	36	3.9	67
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	1,282	1,337	55	4.3	86
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occupations						
29-1141	Registered Nurses	1,622	1,763	141	8.7	105
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	106	125	19	17.9	8
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	567	619	52	9.2	50
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	102	131	29	28.4	19
31-9091	Dental Assistants	205	256	51	24.9	37
31-9092	Medical Assistants	546	714	168	30.8	98
Office & Administrative Support Occupations						
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	1,321	1,363	42	3.2	159
43-5011	Cargo and Freight Agents	885	1,051	166	18.8	114
43-5071	Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks	1,733	1,848	115	6.6	193
43-6013	Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	414	491	77	18.6	55
Construction/Wholesale Trade/Maintenance, and Repair Occupations						
47-2111	Electricians	252	316	64	25.4	30
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	180	216	36	20.0	21
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	698	807	109	15.6	74
49-3031	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	491	562	71	14.5	50
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	144	175	31	21.5	16
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	5,253	6,208	955	18.2	691
Total Targeted Occupation Projections		23,224	26,116	2,892	11.07%	2,464
Source: TWC LMI Projections						

As shown in Table 11, six of the targeted occupations require a bachelor’s degree resulting in employment that pays an estimated Median Wage range between \$60,995 - \$74,647. Three of the targeted occupations require an associate's degree with a Median Annual Wage of between \$31,619 - \$72,792. Two of the target occupations require some college, no degree and have a Median Annual Wage of \$36,598 and \$43,441. Six of the occupations require postsecondary nondegree awards and \$30,461 – 51,606.00. Six of the targeted occupations require High School Diplomas or equivalent, the occupations pay the Median Wage range of \$30,354 - \$46,832. Nineteen of the targeted occupations have training identified on the Eligible Training Providers list, provided by Laredo College or Texas A&M International University.

Target 11: Occupations Education, Training and Wages

SOC Code	Occupational Title	Typical Education Needed for Entry into Occupation	2023 Median Hourly Wage	2023 Median Annual Wage	Training Available
Management Occupations					
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	Bachelor's degree	\$32.36	\$67,309	Yes - LC
Business & Financial Operation Occupations					
13-2011	Accountants & Auditors	Bachelor's degree	\$29.32	\$60,995	Yes - LC
Computer and Mathematical Occupations					
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	Some college, no degree	\$20.89	\$43,441	Yes - LC
Education, Training & Library Occupations					
25-2011	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	Associate's degree	\$15.20	\$31,619	Yes - Texas A&M
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	Bachelor's degree	-	\$61,428	Yes - Texas A&M
25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	Bachelor's degree	-	\$62,257	Yes - Texas A&M
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	Bachelor's degree	-	\$60,978	Yes - Texas A&M
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occupations					
29-1141	Registered Nurses	Bachelor's degree	\$35.89	\$74,647	Yes - LC
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	Associate's degree	\$30.81	\$64,078	
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	Postsecondary nondegree award	\$24.81	\$51,606	Yes - LC
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	Associate's degree	\$35.00	\$72,792	
31-9091	Dental Assistants	Postsecondary nondegree award	\$17.12	\$35,615	Yes - LC
31-9092	Medical Assistants	Postsecondary nondegree award	\$14.64	\$30,461	Yes - LC
Office & Administrative Support Occupations					
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	Some college, no degree	\$17.60	\$36,598	Yes - LC
43-5011	Cargo and Freight Agents	High school diploma or equivalent	\$17.14	\$35,642	Texas A&M LC
43-5071	Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks	High school diploma or equivalent	\$14.59	\$30,354	Texas A&M LC
43-6013	Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	High school diploma or equivalent	\$16.11	\$33,512	Yes - LC
Construction/Wholesale Trade/Maintenance, and Repair Occupations					
47-2111	Electricians	High school diploma or equivalent	\$22.07	\$45,915	Yes - LC
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	High school diploma or equivalent	\$18.70	\$38,894	
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	Postsecondary nondegree award	\$19.08	\$39,690	
49-3031	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	High school diploma or equivalent	\$22.52	\$46,832	Yes LC
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	Postsecondary nondegree award	\$20.94	\$43,555	Yes - Texas A&M
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	Postsecondary nondegree award	\$23.07	\$47,976	Yes - LC and others

Source: TWC LMI Projections

Table 12 below, shows the WSST targeted occupations aligned with the industries that employ the occupations. The Table shows each occupation with the number estimated to be employed by each respective industry.

Trade, Transportation and Utilities employ six (6) of the targeted occupations (484, 4885, 4931) Education and Health Services employs (12) of the targeted occupations (6244, 6111, 62, 621, 6211, 6214, 6216). Specialty Trade Contractors employ (3) of the target occupations (238, 2382) Office Administration employ (7) of the target occupations (5412, 5415, 5416, 5613) Automotive repair and maintenance employ 2 of the target occupations (8111).

Table 12: Staffing Patterns

SOC Code	Occupation Title	NAICS Code	Industry Title	Estimated Employment (2022)	Projected Employment (2032)
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	4885	Freight transportation arrangement	419	495
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	4931	Warehousing and storage	58	82
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	5416	Management, scientific, and technical consulting services	70	91
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	8111	Automotive repair and maintenance	59	77
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	5412	Accounting, tax preparation, bookkeeping, and payroll services	134	145
15-1200	Computer Occupations	5415	Computer systems design and related services	53	74
25-2011	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	3025 (6244 Child Care Services)	Education and health services	410	463
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	6111	Elementary and secondary schools	1,853	1,919
25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	6111	Elementary and secondary schools	916	948
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	6111	Elementary and secondary schools	1,277	1,327
29-1141	Registered Nurses	6214	Outpatient care centers	78	94
29-1141	Registered Nurses	6216	Home health care services	269	277
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	62	Health care and social assistance	101	119
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	6216	Home health care services	274	282
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	621	Ambulatory health care services	81	106
31-9091	Dental Assistants	621	Ambulatory health care services	201	253
31-9092	Medical Assistants	6211	Offices of physicians	338	462
31-9092	Medical Assistants	6214	Outpatient care centers	80	103
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	5412	Accounting, tax preparation, bookkeeping, and payroll services	88	86
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	5416	Management, scientific, and technical consulting services	81	94
43-5011	Cargo and Freight Agents	4885	Freight transportation arrangement	822	971
43-5071	Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks	4931	Warehousing and storage	144	168
43-5071	Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks	5416	Management, scientific, and technical consulting services	106	123
43-5071	Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks	5613	Employment services	125	149
43-6013	Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	6211	Offices of physicians	189	236
47-2111	Electricians	238	Specialty trade contractors	141	189
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	2382	Building equipment contractors	125	159
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	4411	Automobile dealers	150	176
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	8111	Automotive repair and maintenance	239	303
49-3031	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	484	Truck transportation	250	293
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	2382	Building equipment contractors	87	116
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	4885	Freight transportation arrangement	384	453

Source: TWCLM Staffing Patterns

B. Labor Force Analysis and Trends

References: WIOA §108(b)(1)(C); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(3)

Boards must include an analysis of the regional workforce, including:

- current labor force employment and unemployment data;
- information on labor market trends; and

- the educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

An analysis of the regional workforce, including the following:

- Employment data
- Unemployment data
- Labor market trends
- Educational and skill levels
- Individuals with barriers to employment WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 6

Using the November employment numbers for the period 2022 to 2024 found in Table 13, employment increased by 7,288 persons in Jim Hogg, Webb and Zapata Counties from 119,141 to 126,429 persons employed. As the number of jobs increased in the 2022 – 2024 November comparison period, the labor force participation rate also increased from 124,205 to 132,141 persons (7,936) between November 2022 and November 2024. Reflected in Table 13, WSST has a 4.3% unemployment rate (5,712 persons) in November 2024, with the highest number of labor force at 132,141 when compared to the other months in 2022 -2024. From the 2022 – 2024 comparison period the employment numbers have fluctuated from the lowest in January 2022 at 117,241 to the highest in November 2024 at 126,429 persons employed.

Table 13: Unemployment/Employment

2022	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Annual
Unemployment Rate	5.4	5	4.3	4.1	4.2	4.6	4.3	4	3.8	3.9	4.1	3.8	4.3
Employment	117,241	118,035	119,175	118,438	118,513	118,804	118,203	118,426	119,074	118,718	119,141	119,994	118,647
Civilian Labor Force	123,883	124,258	124,538	123,501	123,660	124,539	123,526	123,408	123,770	123,518	124,205	124,783	123,966
Number of Unemployed	6,642	6,223	5,363	5,063	5,147	5,735	5,323	4,982	4,696	4,800	5,064	4,789	5,319
2023	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Annual
Unemployment Rate	4.7	4.8	4.3	3.7	4.1	4.5	4.3	4.1	3.8	3.7	3.6	3.5	4.1
Employment	119,162	119,911	121,331	121,230	120,797	121,147	121,910	122,170	122,998	122,992	123,938	123,417	121,750
Labor Force	124,976	125,957	126,717	125,947	125,975	126,809	127,395	127,446	127,887	127,691	128,519	127,933	126,937
Number of Unemployed	5,814	6,046	5,386	4,717	5,178	5,662	5,485	5,276	4,889	4,699	4,581	4,516	5,187
2024	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Annual
Unemployment Rate	4.4	4.9	4.4	3.8	4.0	4.9	4.5	4.4	4.0	4.2	4.3		
Employment	123,141	123,357	123,800	124,299	123,754	123,867	124,511	124,654	125,603	125,537	126,429		
Labor Force	128,746	129,680	129,545	129,241	128,942	130,217	130,350	130,366	130,899	131,029	132,141		
Number of Unemployed	5,605	6,323	5,745	4,942	5,188	6,350	5,839	5,712	5,296	5,492	5,712		

Source: Texas Workforce Commission Local Area Unemployment Statistics Report (LAUS)

Unemployment and Employment by county data shown in Table 13B shows Jim Hogg in 2022 had a 4.8 unemployment rate and a 4.7 rate in 2024. Zapata unemployment rate in 2022 was 6.9 and remained at the same rate in 2024. Webb County had a 4.2 unemployment rate in 2022 and remained at the same rate in 2024. For all three counties the civilian labor force and employment numbers have fluctuated in the 2022 – 2024 period.

Table 13B Unemployment Employment by County 2022 – 2024

Data from TWC's 1st Quarter QCEW Report shown on Table 14 for the years 2022-2024 is broken down by county and indicates the number of establishments, average employment and total wages for each respective county.

Jim Hogg County in 2022 had an estimated 121 establishments with a peak of 127 estimated establishments in 2023 decreasing to 125 in 2024. Although the number of establishments had a slight decrease in 2024, the average employment increased in 2024 with 1,664 persons employed compared to 1,586 in 2022 and the total wages paid in 2022 increased by \$4,986,442 in 2024.

Webb County shows a steady increase in the number of establishments in the 1st Quarter of 2022 at 5,864 when compared to 6,010 establishments in 2024. Average employment also had a steady increase from 101,250 in 2022 when compared to 106,091 employed in 2024. Total wages for Webb County in the 1st quarter of 2022 were \$1,046,367,711 and increased to \$1,197,130,031 in 2024.

Zapata County data indicates an increase in the number of establishments when compared to the 159 establishments in 2022 and 165 establishments in 2024. The average employment numbers also increased to 2,799 in 2024 when compared to 2,637 in the 1st Quarter of 2022. The total wages also show an increase to \$27,681,478 in 2024 when compared to \$25,397,067 in 2022.

Also shown in Table 14 overall establishments increased 2.47% from 6,144 in 2022 to 6,300 in 2024 in the three county South Texas workforce region. Average employment also increased by 4.59% or 5081 employees. Total wages for the three-county area in the period of 2022- 2024 increased by \$15,803,173.

Table 14: Establishments in the Three-Counties

Year	Area	Establishments	Average Employment	Total Wages
2022	Jim Hogg	121	1,586	\$18,123,420.00
2022	Webb	5,864	101,250	\$1,046,367,711.00
2022	Zapata	159	2,637	\$25,397,067.00
TOTAL 2022		6,144	105,473	\$1,089,888,198.00
2023	Jim Hogg	127	1,607	\$20,298,179.00
2023	Webb	5,972	104,281	\$1,150,626,423.00
2023	Zapata	172	2,858	\$29,357,418.00
TOTAL 2023		6,271	108,746	\$1,200,282,020.00
2024	Jim Hogg	125	1,664	\$23,109,862.00
2024	Webb	6,010	106,091	\$1,197,130,031.00
2024	Zapata	165	2,799	\$27,681,478.00
TOTAL 2024		6,300	110,554	\$1,247,921,371.00

Source: TWC QCEW Report 2022, 2023, 2024 Quarter 1

Drilling deeper into the TWC QCEW 1st Quarter of 2024 to look at the number of average employees by industry in each respective county Table 15 shows the largest number of employees within each of the counties are in Trade, Transportation and Utilities and Education and Health Services.

The highest average weekly wages paid for Jim Hogg and Webb Counties are in Natural Resources and Mining and Public Administration, for Zapata County the highest average weekly wages paid are in Manufacturing and Public Administration.

The highest total amount of wages paid in Jim Hogg County is in Education and Health Services at \$5,108,253, while Webb County Trade Transportation and Utilities have paid the highest number of total wages at \$410,347,563 and Zapata had the highest total wages paid in Education and Health Services at \$10,494,817.

Table 15: Industry Average Employment and Total Wages Paid by County

Area	Industry Code	Industry	Establishments	Average Employment	Average Weekly Wage	Total Wages
Jim Hogg	1011	Natural Resources and Mining	16	86	\$ 2,923.00	\$ 3,267,422.00
Jim Hogg	1012	Construction	5	45	\$ 776.00	\$ 450,643.00
Jim Hogg	1013	Manufacturing	6	42	\$ 772.00	\$ 424,800.00
Jim Hogg	1021	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	29	327	\$ 925.00	\$ 3,933,159.00
Jim Hogg	1023	Financial Activities	13	44	\$ 676.00	\$ 389,435.00
Jim Hogg	1024	Professional and Business Services	4	9	\$ 407.00	\$ 47,629.00
Jim Hogg	1025	Education and Health Services	14	654	\$ 601.00	\$ 5,108,253.00
Jim Hogg	1026	Leisure and Hospitality	11	75	\$ 300.00	\$ 292,578.00
Jim Hogg	1027	Other Services	8	38	\$ 1,392.00	\$ 687,678.00
Jim Hogg	1028	Public Administration	19	344	\$ 1,901.00	\$ 8,508,265.00
TOTAL JIM HOGG COUNTY			125	1,664		\$ 23,109,862.00
Webb	1011	Natural Resources and Mining	94	1,217	\$ 1,696.00	\$ 26,830,411.00
Webb	1012	Construction	303	2,486	\$ 909.00	\$ 29,385,984.00
Webb	1013	Manufacturing	103	1,006	\$ 975.00	\$ 12,741,943.00
Webb	1021	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	2,619	34,922	\$ 904.00	\$ 410,347,563.00
Webb	1022	Information	44	678	\$ 1,301.00	\$ 11,471,301.00
Webb	1023	Financial Activities	531	3,304	\$ 1,042.00	\$ 44,759,277.00
Webb	1024	Professional and Business Services	770	9,241	\$ 796.00	\$ 95,601,330.00
Webb	1025	Education and Health Services	642	31,987	\$ 756.00	\$ 314,381,144.00
Webb	1026	Leisure and Hospitality	508	11,848	\$ 402.00	\$ 61,933,484.00
Webb	1027	Other Services	283	1,939	\$ 719.00	\$ 18,114,976.00
Webb	1028	Public Administration	72	7,406	\$ 1,777.00	\$ 171,043,224.00
Webb	1029	Unclassified	41	57	\$ 705.00	\$ 519,394.00
TOTAL WEBB COUNTY			6,010	106,091		\$ 1,197,130,031.00
Zapata	1011	Natural Resources and Mining	19	130	\$ 1,255.00	\$ 2,121,446.00
Zapata	1012	Construction	8	140	\$ 910.00	\$ 1,655,811.00
Zapata	1013	Manufacturing	6	21	\$ 1,928.00	\$ 517,973.00
Zapata	1021	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	46	386	\$ 486.00	\$ 2,442,825.00
Zapata	1023	Financial Activities	14	182	\$ 964.00	\$ 2,275,558.00
Zapata	1024	Professional and Business Services	9	39	\$ 1,105.00	\$ 555,319.00
Zapata	1025	Education and Health Services	24	1,330	\$ 607.00	\$ 10,494,817.00
Zapata	1026	Leisure and Hospitality	19	168	\$ 308.00	\$ 671,242.00
Zapata	1027	Other Services	4	30	\$ 340.00	\$ 132,494.00
Zapata	1028	Public Administration	16	373	\$ 1,406.00	\$ 6,813,993.00
TOTAL ZAPATA			165	2,799		\$ 27,681,478.00

Source: 1st Quarter 2024 TWC Qcew Report

In Table 16, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the respective WSST 3-county area's persons age 25 and over high school graduate data shows that Webb County has 21.90% of the population 25 years and older completing a high school or equivalency, for Zapata's 25 years or over population there are 29.2% that graduated high school or equivalency, while Jim Hogg had 40.9% of the 25 years or over population holding high school diplomas or equivalency. Zapata and Jim Hogg all have higher high school graduate rates when compared to Texas at 24.2%.

In all three counties the percentage of persons 25 and older that have less than a 9th grade education or did not complete the 9th to 12th grade to receive a diploma is substantially higher when compared to Texas.

In Webb County 15.40% of the 25 years and over population hold bachelor's degrees, in Zapata the bachelor's degree rate is 9.7%, while in Jim Hogg the rate is 13.8% of the population age 25

or over that hold bachelor's degrees, all have lower bachelor's degree completion rates when compared to Texas at 21.6%. Webb County data indicates of the 155,484 persons aged 25 or over, 20.60% or 32,050 have some college but did not complete a degree, this is higher when compared to Texas at 19.8%.

Table 16: Educational Attainment 2023

Educational Attainment in 2023	Webb		Zapata		Jim Hogg		Texas
Population 25 years and over	155,484	100%	7,944	100.0%	2,406	100%	100.0%
Less than 9th grade	22,910	14.70%	1,543	19.4%	212	8.8%	7.1%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	21,002	13.50%	1,312	16.5%	299	12.4%	6.6%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	34,011	21.90%	2,323	29.2%	985	40.9%	24.2%
Some college, no degree	32,050	20.60%	1,192	15.0%	421	17.5%	19.8%
Associate's degree	9,851	6.30%	519	6.5%	33	1.4%	8.1%
Bachelor's degree	23,949	15.40%	768	9.7%	331	13.8%	21.6%
Graduate or professional degree	11,711	7.50%	287	3.6%	125	5.2%	12.6%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey							

Census data found in Table 17, show that the population estimates in Webb County increased by 35 persons between 2020 and 2023, Zapata and Jim Hogg are both showing a decrease in population from 2020 to 2023. The data also shows persons residing in the three counties of Webb (88.10%), Zapata (84.9%) and Jim Hogg (61.60%) speak a language other than English in substantially more households when compared to Texas at 34.90%. All three counties have a higher disability population under age 65 when compared to Texas at 8.40%. Mean household income for the period 2019-2021 shows all three counties have a lower median household income when compared to Texas at \$76,292. Webb County (22.5%), Zapata (30.4%) and Jim Hogg (24.6%) have a higher number of persons living in poverty when compared to Texas at 13.70%. The three counties have made gains in the number of households that have computers between the period of 2019-2023.

Table 17: WSST Census Indicators

Census Indicator	Webb	Zapata	Jim Hogg	Texas
Population Estimates, July 1, 2023	267,148	13,736	4,720	30,503,301
Population Estimates, April 1, 2020	267,113	13,887	4,835	29,149,458
Estimated difference 2020 - 2023	35	-151	-115	1,353,843
Language Other than English spoken at home percentage 2019-2023	88.10%	84.9%	61.6%	34.90%

Mean Travel Time to Work (minutes) 2019-2023	21.9	25.1	26	26.7
Persons with a Disability, under 65 years, 2019-2023	9.4%	12.0%	13.3%	8.40%
Median Household Income 2019-2021	\$62,506	\$36,527	\$42,230	\$76,292
Number of Persons in Poverty	22.5%	30.4%	24.6%	13.70%
Households with computers 2019-2023	94.40%	85.80%	93.90%	95.60%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 Quick Facts				

C. Workforce Development Analysis

References: WIOA §108(b)(1)(D); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(4)

Boards must include an analysis of:

- workforce development activities in the region, including education and training;
- the strengths and weaknesses of the Board’s workforce development activities;
- the effectiveness of the Board’s programs and services;
- the Board’s capacity to provide workforce development activities to address;
- the identified education and skills needs of the workforce; and
- the employment needs of employers.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

An analysis of workforce development activities in the region, including the following:

- General workforce development activities
- Education activities, including Early Childhood Education (ECE) and K–12
- Training activities
- Strengths and weaknesses of activities
- Effectiveness of programs and services
- The Board’s capacity to provide workforce development activities
- Individuals with barriers to employment
- Employment needs of employers

Education Activities and Training Activities

In planning for the updated development of the South Texas 2025 – 2028 Strategic Plan, WSST conducted a focus group with education providers. Representatives from Laredo, United, Zapata, Jim Hogg Independent School Districts and Laredo College participated in the discussion. The meeting began with a labor market presentation that included the proposed in-demand

industries, in-demand occupations and target occupations and employer survey results. WSST shared with the education training providers the skills gaps and industry expectations identified by employers. Educators provided valuable insights to help address employer occupational expectations and how they could better align educational outcomes with workforce requirements. For instance, many of the transportation and warehouse employers identified the need for entry level job seekers to have a forklift certification, Laredo College provides training for certified logistics which includes a safety course and forklift certification; however, the student cannot be issued the license until they turn 18. Laredo College is offering the training to the Webb County school districts and after the discussion will be working with Zapata and Jim Hogg ISD to implement the training and will also be offering training in other warehouse and transportation needed occupations. WSST will continue to work with the education providers to leverage opportunities including work experience, internships and individual training accounts to better align to meet the evolving needs of the local employers.

Advisory employer groups were also a focus of the discussion and the need to engage employers in the design of curricula that reflects current industry standards and trends. The rural ISDs expressed the challenge of interacting with transportation and warehouse employers, although they do conduct advisory and Career Days meetings with local employers. Laredo ISD extended an invitation to the ISDs to an upcoming Advisory meeting where they cover all programs and have >150 participating including internship and work-based learning teachers and partners.

Another topic of discussion was the opportunity to implement Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship programs. Currently, there is a HVAC program at Laredo ISD's Dr. Leo G. Cigarroa High School through its Pathways in Technology Early College High School (PTECH), where the program students can graduate with a level one certificate in Residential Air Conditioning followed by summer internships with 10 identified employer partners, thereafter they can attend Laredo College to receive the commercial side of the training where they are instructed about working with the big units (chillers). Educators also spoke of the CDL and Microsoft Excel Expert and the challenge to meet the accountability CCMR point. Students take the CDL training; however, they cannot drive until they are 25, so most of the trainees work in entry-level positions and climb the career ladder within the industry.

WSST shared all the workforce center resources and opportunities to enhance programs and educators pledged to continue to collaborate, leverage and work closer together to prepare students to get actual jobs with innovative ways and employer workplace expectations in mind.

Workforce development activities in the region, including education and training

Teacher Externships

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), in 2024 through a competitive procurement process selected WSST as a grant recipient and provided funding to implement a Teacher Externship program during the summer of 2024. The program provided teachers workplace exposure to observe the most up-to-date skill sets needed for targeted industries and demand occupations.

Through the externship experience, teachers created specific lesson concepts and plans to assist students in gaining knowledge about the academic and technical skill sets needed for the targeted industries and demand occupations. The WSST Teacher Externship program was also funded by TWC in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2023 and overall has served over 400 teachers. The WSST Teacher Externship Program was developed with the following intended outcomes:

- The WSST Teacher Externship Programs assisted teachers to incorporate into their lesson plans, the observed connections the teachers make between the application of all knowledge, skills and abilities required for the selected targeted industries and occupations and the delivery of the requirements in their teaching strategies and lessons.
- This program provided teachers the opportunity to observe the application of employer required skills and facilitate connections so future workforce applicants can be prepared when seeking employment and obtain employment.
- Teachers become familiar with workforce career center resources and programs, career readiness and labor market data source links that assist in preparing students to make strategic career decisions.
- Teachers were assigned to employers and visited job sites to observe the application of employer-required skills, and competencies required for the target occupations and the industry. Teachers expressed that the Externship Program's worksite visits made them more aware of real-world scenarios that could be used in their teaching discipline.

The teachers discussed their lesson plan concepts in small and large groups and shared information about worksite visits and proposed lesson plan concepts. The facilitator assisted teachers by providing hands-on team building, ice breaker and communication strategies that were used in the small and large group discussions that could also be used in the classroom. Teachers during the group discussions shared their observations of needed skills in the workplace such as communication with team members, working in groups/teams, public speaking, the use of Microsoft products, technology, work ethics, hard and soft skills.

Innovation Grant

The WSST Board continues to work to ensure all the workforce center locations are equipped so the full range of services can be provided to all populations and employers. To assist in reaching hard to serve populations, WSST coordinated and planned the opening of 12 Workforce Virtual Stations (WVS), funded by the Innovation Grant awarded by the Texas Workforce Commission. Job seekers are connected via video with the staff at the Laredo center and receive the assistance they need in real time. The WVS are equipped with a study carrel, personal computer, camera, microphone, printer, scanner, headphone, telephone, and include auxiliary aids and services for individuals with disabilities. The WVS allows WSST to transition to an enhanced delivery of workforce center services that better connects rural county job seekers with employers while maintaining an environment that has high protocols in safety for all involved.

Laredo Cares 3.0

Laredo College, the City of Laredo and Workforce Solutions for South Texas have joined forces to address the need for workforce training in the South Texas workforce region. The three partners collaborated to implement the Laredo CARES 3.0 Workforce Training Program. This is the third round for the workforce training and certification program that prepares individuals to acquire the proper skills and certifications to find a job in key industries located in South Texas. Funding for the program is provided through allocations from both the city of Laredo and Laredo College. Both entities have committed and pledged up to \$750,000 each for a total of up to \$1,500,000 in program funding.

Eligible participants can choose from 18 different programs in fields such as health and medicine, business, management, technology, education, transportation, logistics and industrial. All training and certifications will be provided by Laredo College Office of Continuing Education. As part of the partnership, Workforce Solutions for South Texas provides additional support services such as resume writing, job seeking, transportation and childcare to help students successfully complete the program. The Laredo Cares 3.0 collaboration 3rd round will provide training to more than 700 individuals, combined with the estimated 1,800 that have benefited since its inception brings the total persons served to 2,500.

A skilled workforce is an essential part of revitalizing the local economy, by offering new skills training, people in the South Texas community will have an increased opportunity for social and financial stability, especially those who were laid off, furloughed, or underemployed. This partnership allows eligible participants to choose from a wide-ranging set of highly skilled programs and become certified in a span of less than six months. There are 18 short-term programs offered at Laredo College that have been identified due to their high demand in the job market.

<https://www.laredo.edu/news/2024/01/Laredo-CARES-3.0.html>

JET grants

The Texas Workforce Commission awarded 2.4 million to four South Texas educational entities to support career and technical (CTE) training programs in high demand careers to an estimated 800 students.

Laredo College received a \$336,300 grant to purchase and install three state-of-the-art truck driving simulators to enhance the training for 200 students as heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers.

Laredo Independent School District (ISD) received three grants:

- \$712,500 grant for equipment to train 130 students in automotive services in partnership with Laredo College.

- \$497,610 grant to train 130 students as dental assistants in partnership with Laredo College.
- \$294,941 grant to train 130 students in HVAC installation in partnership with Laredo College.
- United ISD received a \$90,789 grant to train 90 students in HVAC installation in partnership with Laredo College.
- UISD also received a \$311,531 grant to train 1,100 students as registered nurses in partnership with Laredo College.
- Jim Hogg County ISD received a \$266,868 grant to train 126 students as welders, cutters, solderers and brazers with Coastal Bend College.
- Zapata County ISD received a \$492,165 grant to train 126 students as registered nurses in partnership with Laredo College.

Health Industry

Texas A&M International University recently completed the construction for both the new Health Sciences Education and Research Center alongside an expansion of the existing Western Hemispheric Trade Center. These new facilities are expected to enhance the university's capabilities in healthcare education and research, as well as bolster business outreach programs focused on the Western Hemisphere trade. Texas A&M International University is aiming to help address Laredo's shortage of medical personnel. The project is part of \$328 million in construction projects across the state approved by the Board of Regents.

Childhood Education

WSST developed an incentive program for early childhood professionals who work for TRS providers in one or more of the following areas: rural areas, home-based providers, providers offering care during non-traditional hours and providers with lower teacher/child ratios. End of year one-time bonuses promoted staff retention and incentivized current and newly certified TRS providers. This promoted the continuity of quality care for the children and providing quality care by the same early childhood professional.

Incentives were distributed amongst the qualifying teachers based on the center's star level. And those who met one or more of the additional qualifiers, also received an additional incentive. WSST will invest \$500,000 in the program in the year 2025.

Individuals with Barriers to Employment

All employers surveyed indicated a need for the applicant to have work experience when filling open positions. Independent School Districts and post-secondary training institutions will need to be kept engaged in helping to promote the opportunity for employment in the target and in-demand occupations. A strong work experience program will be needed to facilitate the job placement requirements to meet the employer's expectation.

The education and training to gain knowledge and command of the English language, communication, customer and personal service, active listening skills and the ability to speak and convey information skills is critical to obtaining employment. Data from the 2023 U.S. Census found in Table 16, show that persons residing in the three counties of Webb (88.10%), Zapata (84.9%) and Jim Hogg (34.90%) speak a language other than English in substantially more households when compared to English speakers. Zapata County has the largest population living in poverty at 30.4% when compared to the other two counties.

All twenty-three of the WSST Target Occupations require at a minimum a high school diploma or equivalency. In Table 17, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the respective WSST 3-county area's persons age 25 and over high school graduate data shows that Webb County has 21.90% of the population 25 years and older completing a high school or equivalency, for Zapata's 25 years or over population there are 29.2% that graduated high school or equivalency, while Jim Hogg had 40.9% of the 25 years or over population holding high school diplomas or equivalency. Two of the 3-counties (Zapata and Jim Hogg) have higher high school graduate rates when compared to Texas at 24.60%.

Employment Needs of Employers

To better articulate the current gaps between workforce supply and demand, WSST implemented an on-line survey interview process that resulted with more than 200 employers from different industry-sectors responding. To identify a strategic representative sample targeted industry sectors and the TWC Employer list were utilized.

Employer interview results indicate a convergence of factors that contribute to the staffing challenges they are facing when hiring qualified labor, employers responded that longevity of employment is a major concern, employees do not stay long on the job, have poor work ethic and lack skills. Other examples collectively cited by employers include lack of computer technology skills, a need for truck driving certifications, fork-lift certifications, and Microsoft office certifications, organization and critical soft skills. Transportation and Warehouse Industry employers interviewed are projecting expansion and growth in their respective establishment and will have a greater need for skilled workers.

To address the staffing challenges, WSST strategic planning requires that strong relationships be maintained with employers, and partner agencies in the community that result in collaborative, leveraged efforts that better prepare or transition staffing to the needed workforce occupational supply. Some of these partnerships comprise the broader youth workforce system serving the WSST workforce area which is coordinated to leverage collective funding for maximum benefit to the youth community.

Part 3: Core Programs

A. Workforce Development System

References: WIOA §108(b)(2); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(1)

Boards must describe how the local workforce development system will work with entities carrying out core and required partner programs to support alignment to aid in the provision of services that support the strategies identified in TWC's WIOA Combined State Plan.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

- A description of the local workforce development system will work with entities carrying out core and required partner programs to support alignment.

Note: The plan must describe how the Board's system will work with the entities carrying out the core programs. **The following checklist is for reference only.** WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 7

Core programs:

- Youth workforce investment activities
- Adult employment and training activities
- Dislocated worker employment and training activities
- Adult education and literacy activities
- Employment services
- Vocational rehabilitation services

Required programs (if operated in the Board Area)

- WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs
- Wagner-Peyser Employment Service program
- Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs
- Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program
- Choices, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) employment and training program
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program (SNAP)
- Child Care Services
- Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) programs
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) programs
- Vocational Rehabilitation programs
- National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) program
- Apprenticeship programs

- Career and Technical Education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 USC §2301, et seq.)
- Veteran employment and training programs–Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER)
- Job Corp programs
- Native American programs
- US Department of Housing and Urban Development programs
- Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act
- Reintegration of Offenders programs
- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker programs
- Senior Community Service Employment Program

WSST is committed to integrating core and required partner services into a cohesive and seamless workforce system that aligns with the strategies outlined in TWC’s WIOA Combined State Plan. By leveraging partnerships and resources, WSST ensures the effective delivery of services to job seekers and employers, minimizing duplication and maximizing impact.

Strategies to Align Core and Required Partner Programs:

1. Integration and Alignment within the Workforce Center System: WSST has developed and implemented policies, procedures, and practices to ensure efficient integration of services offered by core and required partners, creating a seamless One-Stop Workforce Center system. Key initiatives include:
 - *Facility Enhancements:* Expanding Workforce Center facilities to accommodate core and required partners, ensuring their presence on-site and fostering collaboration.
 - *Co-Location of Services:* Core partners such as Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) providers, and Wagner-Peyser staff are co-located at the Workforce Center to enable joint service delivery and streamline customer access.
 - *Referral and Coordination Protocols:* Formalized processes ensure customers are seamlessly referred to appropriate programs, such as SNAP, TANF, and Vocational Rehabilitation, based on their individual needs.
2. Collaborative Planning and Goal Alignment: WSST collaborates with core and required partners to align local strategies with TWC’s goals. This includes joint planning to integrate resources and develop programs that support Career Pathways and industry-aligned credentials. Examples include:
 - *Joint Workshops and Training Programs:* Collaborative efforts with AEL providers and secondary/post-secondary institutions help to bridge education and employment, ensuring participants transition smoothly into the workforce.

- *Vocational Rehabilitation Partnerships*: WSST partners with Vocational Rehabilitation Services to create tailored employment plans for individuals with disabilities, ensuring accessible and equitable services.
 - *Employer Engagement Initiatives*: Collaborative outreach to employers that serves all workforce programs and partners promotes inclusive hiring practices, particularly for veterans, individuals with disabilities, and those involved in reintegration programs.
3. Enhanced Access to Services for Special Populations: WSST prioritizes removing barriers for hard to serve customers such as limited English proficiency, disabilities, or involvement with the justice system.
- *Mobile and Virtual Services*: In addition to physical locations, WSST continuously enhances virtual service offerings, including establishing Workforce Virtual Stations (WVS), to ensure access to services in rural and underserved areas.
 - *Targeted Outreach*: Collaboration with community partners and programs like Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker programs, Veteran Services, and parole/probation offices ensures engagement with populations often disconnected from the workforce system.
 - *Specialized Events*: WSST hosts initiatives such as the Red, White, and You Job Fair, Disability Alliance Job Fair, and Second Chance hiring events to connect hard to serve populations with employment and training opportunities that remediate barriers and gives hard to serve populations with opportunities to succeed.

Key Goals and Objectives:

1. Increase the Effectiveness of the One-Stop Service Delivery Network:
- Ensure all services offered by WSST and its partners are easily accessible without duplication of effort.
 - Provide real-time labor market information through Workforce Center Resource Rooms and online platforms.
 - Maintain continuous improvement of the integration and alignment of core and required programs.
2. Foster Strong Partnerships with Required Programs:
- Facilitate communication and collaboration with entities such as the Texas Veterans Commission, TWC Vocational Rehabilitation, and local AEL providers to align services with local labor market demands.
 - Promote co-enrollment across programs to maximize resources and provide customers with holistic services.

3. Support Industry-Driven Career Pathways:

- Collaborate with Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and apprenticeship programs to create clear pathways from education to employment.
- Work with employers and advisory boards to identify and promote industry-recognized credentials that align with high-demand occupations. Ex., WSST partners with Laredo College to engage their advisory committees for workforce programs to gain vital insights into current and future occupational skills, knowledge, and objective needs.

Resource Contributions of Core and Required Partners: WSST is works to continuously enhance coordination between WIOA core partners and additional required partners.

Core Partners:

- *Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker Programs:* Focus on providing employment readiness, training, and placement services for individuals, including those with barriers to employment.
- *Adult Education and Literacy (AEL):* Enhances participants' foundational skills and connects them to training opportunities aligned with Career Pathways.
- *Vocational Rehabilitation Services:* Provides specialized services to individuals with disabilities, including training, counseling, and job placement assistance.
- *Employment Services:* Offers job matching, labor market information, and support for job seekers and employers.

Required Partners:

- *TANF and SNAP Employment and Training Programs:* Assists low-income individuals in gaining employment and self-sufficiency.
- *Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Programs:* Provides specialized services to workers impacted by global trade.
- *Veterans Services:* Offers employment services and training for veterans through Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists.
- *Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA):* Helps UI recipients transition into employment.
- *Community Services Block Grant:* Administer by the Webb County Community Action Agency, aids eligible participants with emergency food, housing, and utility assistance. Linkages have been established over the years coordination and referral take place through the CSBG Caseworkers.

B. Core Programs—Expand Access, Facilitate Development, and Improve Access

References: WIOA §108(b)(3); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(2)

Each Board must include a description of how the Board will work with entities carrying out core programs to:

- expand access to employment, training, education, and support services for eligible WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 8 individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment;
- facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs; and
- improve access to activities that lead to a recognized postsecondary credential (such as an industry-recognized certificate or certification) that is portable and stackable.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of how the Board will work with entities that facilitate core programs to do the following:

- Expand access to employment training, education, and support services for the following:
 - Eligible individuals
 - Eligible individuals with barriers to employment
- Facilitate development of career pathways and co-enrollment in core programs
- Improve access to activities that lead to a recognized postsecondary credential (such as an industry-recognized certificate or certification) that is portable and stackable

Core programs:

- Youth workforce investment activities
- Adult employment and training activities
- Dislocated worker employment and training activities
- Adult education and literacy activities
- Employment services
- Vocational rehabilitation services

The WSST Board employs a multifaceted approach to expand access to core programs, facilitate Career Pathways development and co-enrollment, and improve access to recognized post-secondary credentials, particularly for individuals with barriers to employment.

Expanding Access to Employment, Training, and Support: WSST focuses on increasing access to core workforce services across its expansive, rural three-county region. Recognizing both geographic and systemic barriers, WSST uses the following strategies:

- Targeted Marketing and Outreach: WSST collaborates with service providers to engage local media coverage, provide informational presentations and distribute information, and coordinate campaigns that highlight available workforce services and events.
- Social Media Engagement: Platforms like Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube facilitate direct communication with customers and expand service reach beyond physical locations and traditional hours.
- WSST Board Website: The WSST website is interactive and offers visitors a direct contact with the Onestop Center via email, up to date with news and announcements, resources for parents, and details on hiring events, job fairs, and community events.
- Partnership Initiatives: WSST works with partners that serve populations with traditionally low engagement rates with workforce services (to expand access), including TWC Vocational Rehabilitation, Texas Veterans Commission, US Federal Courthouse, parole and probation offices, and community centers. Examples of partner activities designed to expand access include:
 - *Laredo Disability Alliance Job Fair*: For the past three years, WSST has leveraged resources with regional partners to provide a job fair targeting individuals with disabilities. Partners work collaboratively to outreach employers that actively outreach and accommodate individuals with disabilities. Job fair partners include the Border Region MHMR, City of Laredo, Goodwill Industries, Laredo Independent School District, Laredo Vocational Development Services, Let's Go Professional Staffing, Texas A&M International University, TWC-VRS Division for Blind Services, United Independent School District, U Can Work 2, and VAIL
 - *Laredo College Job Fairs*: WSST partners with the Laredo College Workforce Development Center (WDC) to support job fairs tailored for Laredo College students and alumni. This partnership also allows us to introduce WSST services to a new population.
 - *Parole and Probation Support*: WSST delivers services at parole/probation offices and through mobile units, reducing access barriers for justice-involved individuals.
 - *Workforce Virtual Stations (WVS)*: Twelve virtual stations provide communities with Wi-Fi-enabled resource labs and direct contact with Workforce Center staff, ensuring outreach to underserved areas.
 - *Second Chance Partnerships*: WSST provides regularly scheduled services on site to assist Second Chance customers. This service delivery strategy enables WSST to provide services to participants with restrictions that do not allow them to visit Workforce Centers during normal hours of operation, and to reduce participation barriers for customers with a historically low engagement rate with the workforce system. The US Federal Courthouse view WSST as a reliable and value-adding partner and encourage and/or require Second Chance Individuals to engage WSST programs and services as part of their individual service plans. The team offers workshops, provides mock interviews, updates resumes, and job referrals. As part of this engagement, Business Service Representatives continue to ask every employer if they are a second chance employer, if so, they are added to an excel sheet of second chance.

Facilitating Career Pathways and Co-Enrollment: WSST ensures workforce resources are strategically aligned to promote Career Pathway-driven programming and seamless co-enrollment.

- Career Pathways Framework: Annually, WSST conducts labor market analyses to identify target industries and occupations, ensuring training investments align with regional demand. Customers are guided through Career Pathways designed to support long-term career planning and employment outcomes. Service delivery design emphasizes multiple entry points into target Career Pathways.
- Co-Enrollment Policies: WSST collaborates with service providers to implement clear policies that promote co-enrollment across core programs, such as SNAP, TANF, and WIOA, maximizing the scope of available services. We also coordinate with community partners providing case management services to implement co-enrollment practices that minimize redundancies for dually served customers. *A successful co-enrollment example is our Child Care Services Initial Job Search strategy. This strategy allows parents without a job but needing one and assistance to care for their child(ren), to have a span of three months to obtain a job while receiving a 100% scholarship for their child(ren) to attend a learning center. Once a job is obtained, the parents are allowed to continue receiving a scholarship with a Parent Share of Cost, to continue the service for the rest of a 12-month period.*
- Joint Planning with Partners: WSST engages secondary and post-secondary schools, Independent School Districts, proprietary training institutions, and community-based literacy programs to develop shared Career Pathway strategies and align service delivery and identify articulation opportunities.
- Coordinated Workforce Programs: Defined referral and coordination procedures ensure seamless transitions between community partners and the Workforce Centers and capitalize on co-enrollment opportunities, expanding customer access to services. Prioritized planning partners include Laredo College (traditional post-secondary, Adult Education and Learning, and continuing education), regional Independent School Districts (ISD), and community-based literacy programs. We have implemented an online Inter Agency referral form with our partners to facilitate referrals and resource coordination. Partners utilizing the form include **Laredo Job Corps, Bethany House, Habitat for Humanity, and others.**

Improving Access to Recognized Postsecondary Credentials: WSST prioritizes strategies that lead to portable, stackable credentials recognized by industry and employers.

- Strategic Planning: WSST prioritizes credential bearing training programs and stackable credentials during our annual planning process. Training providers and programs that meet these criteria are identified for easy reference by Workforce Center staff. This approach better ensures customers are equipped with industry-relevant skills.
- Advisory Participation: WSST staff actively participate in industry advisory groups to remain informed of employer trends and credentialing needs, ensuring workforce services remain relevant and responsive. For example, WSST engages with Laredo College to gain insights from their workforce program advisory committees. Laredo College advisory

committees follow the Guidelines for Instructional Programs in Workforce Education (GIPWE) and provide valuable insights to inform WSST service delivery.

Part 4: One-Stop Service Delivery

A. One-Stop Service Delivery System

References: WIOA §108(b)(6); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(5)

Each Board must include a description of its workforce area's one-stop delivery system, including explanations of the following:

- How the Board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers and how providers will meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and job seekers
- How the Board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including to remote areas, using technology and other means
- How entities within the one-stop delivery system, including Boards, contracted service WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 9 providers, and one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA §188 (related to Non-Discrimination), if applicable, and with applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals who have disabilities.
- The roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of the one-stop delivery system, including explanations of the following:

- How the Board will ensure continuous improvement of eligible providers
- How providers will meet the employment needs of employers, workers, and job seekers
- How the Board will use technology and other means to facilitate access to services, including referrals to VR and AEL services and access to remote areas
- Compliance with non-discrimination provisions consistent with WIOA §188 and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
- Roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners

Continuous Improvement of Eligible Training Providers (ETP): WSST Board staff evaluate the prior 2 years performance of ETPs during our analysis and determination of target and demand occupations and industries. Analysis includes achievement rates for measurable skills gains, completions, and credentials. Further analysis is conducted on underperforming ETPs to identify opportunities for improved performance and determine whether the ETP training

programs should remain a fundable training option. WSST meets directly with ETPs as needed to address deficiencies in performance and communication with workforce center staff.

Contractual performance measures and service levels are negotiated with WSST service providers each year. Contracted performance measures include WIOA measurable skills gain and credential rates, as well as local performance measures, as needed, to ensure positive performance from local ETPs. Service providers monitor program utilization and performance of ETPs during the program year and address communication and performance deficiencies as they occur. Quarterly scorecards are published to monitor performance, inform planning, and guide workforce staff in customer service delivery.

Facilitating Access: WSST maintains strategically located Workforce Centers, including a central location in Laredo and a satellite center in Zapata, to serve the region's diverse population. Workforce centers are located strategically within the region and provide access >90% of the region's residents within a 10-mile radius. Residents from Hebbronville (Jim Hogg County) are served through the Workforce Virtual Station located inside the Jim Hogg Courthouse Annex Building, in direct contact to the staff in Laredo.

Technology and Innovative Strategies: Recognizing the challenges posed by a significant rural geography, WSST has implemented innovative strategies to enhance accessibility:

1. *WSST Website:* We have developed the WSST to be an efficient storefront for job seeker and employer customers, with opportunities to engage staff through contact and interest forms, chat, and contact information.
2. *Social Media:* We use social media platforms including Facebook, X, Instagram, and LinkedIn to share information about job fairs, unemployment and employment trends, activities around the community, job openings, program information, and training opportunities. Customers interact with Workforce Center staff through messaging for technical assistance and career advising.
3. *Referral System:* WSST uses an online Inter Agency referral form to facilitate referrals to and from community partners.
4. *Partner Locations and Virtual Stations:* Municipalities, libraries, and community centers provide temporary service locations for workshops, career advising, community and job fairs, and job search assistance, ensuring outreach to underserved areas.

Compliance with ADA and WIOA §188: WSST ensures accessibility through adherence to TWC's core principles: effective customer access to services, creating accessible workspaces, and meeting federal and state legal requirements. Annual facility audits evaluate physical accessibility, signage, and assistive equipment. Our vocational rehabilitation partners are included and provide additional recommendations to improve facilities, service accessibility, and staff training. Annual compliance training includes:

- Annual training for staff on ADA and the Rehabilitation Act, including TWC's 'Disabilities: Access for All' module or equivalent partner training; and

- Continuous training and technical assistance for staff to address the specific needs of individuals with disabilities effectively.

The WSST Board’s Equal Opportunity Officer and contracted monitors conduct periodic evaluations to ensure equitable access for special populations. Additionally, WSST mandates that all service provider worksites meet ADA accessibility standards and integrates these requirements into procurement policies, procedures, and provider contracts.

Roles and Resource Contributions of One-Stop Partners: WSST leverages a robust network of collaborative one-stop partners to provide comprehensive services to our job seeker and employer. WSST acts as the coordinating partner to align resources and services to meet local employment needs. Partners contribute expertise, services, funding, and operational support to enhance system offerings and ensure a seamless experience for our customers. Table 18 below identifies key one-stop partners and briefly describes their role and contribution in the workforce system.

Table 18: One-Stop Partners and Roles

Partner	Role
WSST (SERCO currently contracted service provider)	Manage and operate Workforce Centers and core programs: WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth; TANF; TANF NCP; SNAP
WSST SERCO currently contracted service provider)	Child Care Services
Texas Veterans Commission	Services to Veterans
TWC State Staff (coordinated management and supervision with WSST)	Wagner Peyser Employment Services
Laredo College	Adult Education contract with TWC / Administrative and fiscal agent
TWC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (located in workforce centers)	Employment Services to individuals with Disabilities
AARP	Training and referral network serving low income individuals 55 years of age and older
Motivation Education and Training (MET)	Employment and Training program for individuals who are ranchers, farm workers and Migrant seasonal workers

Texas Veterans Leadership Program	Resource and referral network connecting returning veterans
WSST (United, Laredo, Zapata and Jim Hogg Independent School Districts, and LC Economic Development Center contracted service providers)	Manage and operate special programs to promote the targeted occupations and career opportunities for employment, and employer expectation that contribute to employer connection.
VITA	<p>The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program offers free tax help to people who generally make \$75,000 or less, persons with disabilities, the elderly and limited English-speaking taxpayers who need assistance in preparing their own tax returns. IRS-certified volunteers provide free basic income tax return preparation with electronic filing to qualified individuals. These volunteers receive annual training to ensure that they become certified and are up to date with tax law.</p> <p>Assistance is provided at Workforce Solutions for South Texas (WFST), located at 1406 Jacaman Rd, Suite A, volunteers provide free tax preparation services to the public on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5:00 PM to 8:30 PM. The site is a “drop-off” site where the taxpayer will leave copies of all required documents with the Site Coordinator so the tax preparer can work on the tax return. The tax preparer will then pick up their completed tax return the following day (Tuesday or Thursday).</p> <p>All tax preparation services are provided at ZERO cost to the taxpayer. WSST will provide free W2, 1099-G, ITIN application assistance and e-filing services at no cost.</p> <p>VITA services at the Workforce Solutions site will be provided starting Thursday, January 23, 2025, and ending on Tuesday, April 15, 2025, from 5:00 PM to 8:30 PM</p>

B. Employer Engagement, Economic Development, and Unemployment Insurance Program Coordination

References: WIOA §108(b)(4); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(3); WIOA §108(b)(5); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(4)

Boards must include a description of the strategies and services that will be used in the workforce area to:

- facilitate the engagement of employers, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations, in workforce development programs;
- support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the workforce area;
- coordinate workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities that are carried out in the local workforce area;
- promote entrepreneurial-skills training and microenterprise services; and
- strengthen the linkage between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs. WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 10

Note: This may include the implementation of initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, the use of effective business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies that are designed to meet the needs of regional employers.

These initiatives must support the strategy described above.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of strategies and services to:

- Facilitate the engagement of employers in workforce development programs, including
- small employers and employers of in-demand industry sectors and occupations
- Support a local workforce development system that meets needs of businesses
- Better coordinate workforce development and economic development activities
- Promote entrepreneurial-skills training
- Promote microenterprise services
- Strengthen the links between one-stop and unemployment insurance

Facilitating Employer Engagement: WSST Business Services Representatives (BSRs) actively connect with employers, including small businesses and those in in-demand industry sectors and occupations, ensuring workforce programs address their needs effectively. BSRs engage employers as partners as well as beneficiaries of workforce initiatives. Services such as On-the-Job Training (OJT), Apprenticeships, Pre-Apprenticeships, Transitional Jobs, Work

Experience, and Subsidized Employment are tailored to target Career Pathways and high-demand occupations. Small employers receive targeted support to supplement their human resources and labor exchange capabilities.

BSRs provide all information to employers with folders containing all the services and programs available for their benefit at no cost. BSRs also offer no cost space at the Workforce Center, including the Multipurpose Room, the Resource Room, the Computer Lab, and the Virtual Lab. Each one of these rooms accommodate a different number of employees or job seekers to respond to the needs of the employer.

Meeting Business Needs: WSST Board staff collaborate with the BST to identify and respond to employers' needs. Weekly meetings with our service provider drive system alignment and responsiveness. Current initiatives include targeted training on use of labor market information, optimizing OJT and customized training programs, as well as partnerships with entities like Laredo College to promote skills development grants. Additionally, WSST actively frequently applies for competitive grants services to employers in South Texas.

An excellent example of collaboration in workforce development is the Laredo Cares program, a partnership between Laredo College (LC), the City of Laredo, and Workforce Solutions for South Texas (WSST). Through Laredo Cares, participants gain access to vital training, support services, and job opportunities. The annual Laredo Cares Spring Job Fair, a cornerstone of this initiative, brings together hundreds of students and job seekers from across South Texas, connecting them with a wide range of employment and support services. Each year, approximately 70 businesses participate, creating valuable opportunities for local talent to engage directly with employers.

Coordinating Workforce and Economic Development: WSST has a history of collaborating with regional economic development partners to integrate workforce initiatives into broader economic development strategies. This includes participating in site location visits, providing customized labor market analysis, and publishing unemployment data to inform regional economic development strategies. WSST's involvement with organizations like the Laredo Economic Development Corporation, Tri-County Economic Development Committee, and local chambers of commerce ensures alignment with economic development goals.

An example of WSST's exemplary coordination with economic development is our collaborative with Laredo Economic Development Corporation, MileOne, and the City of Laredo to deliver Economic Development Week. The Week culminated in a job fair that attracted businesses from downtown Laredo as well as also a variety of community services including food bags provided by the Laredo Regional Food Bank, free haircuts from The Barber Education Academy, and resume assistance for all interested participants.

Promoting Entrepreneurial Skills and Microenterprise Services: WSST partners with local organizations to offer training, resources, and mentorship to promote entrepreneurial skills

and microenterprise. These initiatives are integrated into workforce services to foster economic resilience and innovation.

Strengthening Connections with Unemployment Insurance Programs: WSST enhances integration with unemployment insurance (UI) through proactive strategies, including:

- Disseminating accurate and user-friendly UI information in Workforce Centers.
- Training staff annually on UI program guidelines and customer support protocols.
- Conducting targeted outreach to UI claimants early in their benefit cycles, offering services and assessments to address barriers and reduce long-term unemployment. . Staff are trained in using text messaging, mass emails, and the Inter Agency Referral Form to coordinate and deliver assistance. These efforts help guide claimants toward workforce programs, including WIOA, that can support them in successfully re-entering the labor market.
- Assisting UI claimants with the service of ID Me when needing to verify identity as requested by TWC.

These efforts ensure claimants are guided toward workforce programs, including WIOA, that can help them reenter the labor market effectively. Claimants that have difficulty re-engaging in the local labor market frequently have barriers that can effectively be addressed by WIOA and other workforce programs and other targeted service strategies.

C. Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services

References: WIOA §108(b)(12); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(11)

Boards must include a description of the strategies that are used to maximize coordination, improve service delivery, and avoid the duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act services and other services that are provided through the one-stop delivery system.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of the strategies that are used to:

- Maximize coordination
- Improve service delivery
- Avoid duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act services and other services that are provided through the one-stop delivery system

WSST has established procedures and practices to (1) seamlessly coordinate Wagner-Peyser funded employment services with other programs and services offered via the Workforce Centers and (2) remove redundancies in service delivery and avoid duplication.

In addition, the following strategies maximize coordination between Workforce Center staff and Wagner-Peyser staff and enhance service delivery to job seeker and employer customers:

- Texas Model for Integrated Management: We partner with TWC management of Wagner-Peyser-funded to ensure alignment of goals and activities.
- Inclusive Collaboration: TWC Wagner-Peyser staff actively participate in management, departmental, and team meetings, resulting in clear and consistent communication as well as collaborative planning.
- Comprehensive Training: Wagner-Peyser staff are included in all relevant staff trainings. This includes programmatic training, Career Pathways guidance, and referrals to community resources.
- Standardized Workflows: Wagner-Peyser services are included in standardized workflows used locally, clearly identifying engagement points during customer service plans.

D. Integrated, Technology-Enabled Intake and Case Management

References: WIOA §108(b)(21); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(20)

Boards must include a description of how one-stop centers are implementing and transitioning to WorkInTexas.com for the programs that are carried out under WIOA and by one-stop partners.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of the following:

- How one-stop centers are implementing and transitioning to WorkInTexas.com for programs carried out under WIOA and one-stop partners WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 11

WSST has successfully transitioned to WorkInTexas.com as the primary case management information system (in collaboration with our local service provider) for all programs operated under WIOA and by one-stop partners. This transition aligns with the requirements outlined in WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1.

Steps to Ensure a Successful Transition:

1. Comprehensive Training for Staff: WSST participated in TWC train-the-trainer sessions to equip frontline staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to manage the transition effectively. Local WorkInTexas Liaisons were also designated to deliver targeted training sessions and provide technical support to staff and end users. Every staff hired is trained on the use of WIT. Refresher training courses are provided twice a year.
2. Development of Support Resources: WSST created desk aids and standard operating procedures (SOPs) to guide Workforce Center staff in utilizing WorkInTexas.com for case management, enhancing consistency and efficiency across the board.

3. Implementation of Monitoring and Compliance Tools: WSST designed and implemented robust monitoring and compliance tools to evaluate staff proficiency and ensure effective usage of WorkInTexas.com. These tools help identify areas for improvement and maintain system integrity as the primary case management platform.
4. System Integration: WSST ensured that WorkInTexas.com is used consistently across all workforce programs and one-stop partner services, enabling streamlined intake processes and case management across all workforce initiatives.

WSST will continue to develop the staff training, standard operating procedures, and internal controls necessary to ensure WorkInTexas.com is fully implemented as the case management system for all TWC funded programs

E. Third Party Partnership in SNAP Employment and Training Programs

Reference: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training Third-Party Partnership Guide

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission has directed TWC to expand the use of SNAP E&T Third Party Partnerships (TPP) throughout the state, with a goal of implementing TPP in all workforce areas by Federal Fiscal Year 2029. Boards must provide an assurance that they are planning for the expansion of TPP and must describe any planned or completed steps toward implementation.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

- An assurance statement that the Board is planning for TPP expansion, including a description of any planned or completed steps.

Third Party Partnership in SNAP Employment and Training Programs: WSST is committed to expansion of SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) Third-Party Partnerships (TPP), as directed by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). WSST recognizes the importance of TPP in leveraging additional resources to enhance SNAP E&T services and achieve the goal of statewide implementation by Federal Fiscal Year 2029.

WSST is actively planning for the expansion of SNAP E&T TPP in accordance with TWC and HHSC directives. The Board is building partnerships with eligible third-party organizations to provide enhanced employment and training services for SNAP recipients.

Planned and Completed Steps:

1. Assessment of Local Resources and Opportunities:

- Conducted an initial assessment to identify potential Third-Party Partners (TPP), such as community colleges, non-profit organizations, and employers with established training programs.
 - Engaged with local service providers to evaluate their capacity to participate as third-party partners.
2. Stakeholder Engagement and Awareness:
 - Hosted informational meetings with community-based organizations, educational institutions, and other stakeholders to discuss the benefits of TPP collaboration.
 - Promoted awareness of the SNAP E&T TPP model through outreach efforts, including presentations and written materials.
 3. Planning for Implementation:
 - Developed a strategic plan to align TPP expansion efforts with existing SNAP E&T program goals, ensuring services address the specific needs of SNAP recipients in the South Texas region.
 - Incorporated TPP expansion into the WSST operational plans and budget.
 4. Coordination with TWC:
 - Maintained active communication with TWC to stay informed of guidance, technical assistance, and best practices for successful TPP implementation.
 - Participated in TWC-hosted webinars and training sessions to build internal capacity for managing TPP.
 5. Next Steps:
 - Establish formal agreements with selected third-party partners to outline roles, responsibilities, and funding arrangements.
 - Provide training and technical assistance to partners to ensure compliance with SNAP E&T program requirements.
 - Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of TPP services to identify areas for improvement and replication.

The WSST Board is committed to the success of the SNAP E&T Third-Party Partnership initiative and will continue to take deliberate steps toward meeting the statewide goal of comprehensive implementation by 2029.

Part 5: Workforce Investment Activities

A. Rapid Response Activity Coordination

References: WIOA §108(b)(8); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(7)

Each Board must include a description of how the Board will coordinate workforce investment activities that are carried out in the workforce area with the statewide rapid response activities described in WIOA §134(a)(2)(A).

Minimum Plan Requirements:

- A description of how the Board will coordinate local workforce investment activities with statewide rapid response activities described in WIOA §134(a)(2)(A).

WSST's service provider is responsible for ensuring seamless coordination between local workforce investment activities and statewide rapid response efforts as outlined in WIOA §134(a)(2)(A). This is achieved via partnership with employers, affected workers, the Business Services Team (BST), the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), other state agencies, and additional partners as needed.

Response Process: Upon receiving a WARN Notice or notification of a mass layoff announcement, the WSST Business Services Team promptly engages the employer to:

1. Assess Layoff Circumstances:
 - Gather details regarding the scope, timing, and nature of the layoff, as well as worker profiles, to understand the workforce impact.
 - Explore layoff aversion strategies in collaboration with regional economic development partners, ensuring that all potential retention measures are evaluated and leveraged.
2. Develop a Comprehensive Service Strategy: If layoff aversion is not feasible, the BST collaborates with the employer to design a targeted strategy that supports both the employer and affected workers. This service strategy includes:
 - *Worker Profiling and Career Advising:* Conducting assessments to determine affected workers' education, skills, experience, and support service needs.
 - *Employer Engagement and Job Matching:* Identifying regional employers actively hiring and matching them with impacted workers.
 - *Workforce Center Orientation:* Providing detailed overviews of local Workforce Center programs and services, including WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs.
 - *Registration and Job Referrals:* Assisting affected workers in registering with WorkInTexas.com and connecting them with job opportunities aligned with their skills and experience.
 - *Comprehensive Support Services:* Engaging with employers and worker representatives to deliver information on unemployment benefits, the Trade Adjustment Act program, and Workforce Center services. Also, offering additional resources, including crisis counseling, financial planning, debt management, and stress/change management support.
 - *Targeted Workshops:* Organizing tailored workshops that address job search skills, resume preparation, aptitude and interest assessments, interview techniques, and other critical topics to prepare workers for reemployment.
 - *Program Enrollment and Retraining:* Facilitating enrollment in programs for training or retraining, ensuring workers are equipped to transition into in-demand occupations or industries.

Collaboration and Impact: Business Services Representatives partner with local economic development organizations, regional employers, and state agencies to provide a unified response

to layoffs, ensuring that all stakeholders are aligned and engaged. This coordinated approach ensures that affected workers receive timely support, access to comprehensive services, and opportunities to reenter the workforce successfully.

By integrating local workforce investment activities with statewide rapid response initiatives, WSST demonstrates its commitment to minimizing the impact of layoffs on the local economy while empowering affected workers to achieve reemployment and economic stability.

Through our coordinated approach to rapid response, WSST has successfully assisted the following employers during the past 2 years:

- Johnny Carino’s
- Laredo Beauty College

B. Youth Activities and Services

References: WIOA §108(b)(9); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(8)

Boards must include a description and assessment of the type and availability of workforce investment activities for youth in the workforce area, including activities for youth with disabilities. This description must include an identification of successful models of such activities.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description and assessment of the type and availability of workforce investment activities for:

- youth;
- youth with disabilities; and WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 12 the identification of:
- successful models of such activities.

WSST leverages workforce system resources and develops partnerships in communities throughout South Texas to ensure the full range of workforce services are available to youth, including the 14 required WIOA elements. Youth services are offered through 2 full-service Workforce Centers in the City of Laredo (Webb County) and Zapata (Zapata County). Centers are located strategically within the region and provide access >90% of the region’s residents within a 10-mile radius.

Table 19: Youth Service Locations

Workforce Center	Location	County
Laredo Workforce Center	1406 Jacman Rd, Suite A Laredo, TX 78041	Webb
Zapata Workforce Center	605 US Hwy 83, Suite B	Zapata

	Zapata, TX 78076	
Hebronville Services	Workforce Virtual Station, Jim Hogg Courthouse Annex Building, 102 E Tilley St.	Jim Hogg

In addition, WSST staff provide onsite youth services at community partner locations to improve across our 3 service counties to improve accessibility to services. Partners where we offer onsite youth services include Triumph Public Schools, Laredo Job Corps Center, Hebronville High School, Zapata High School, and other High Schools in Webb County by continuously participating in Career Days and organizing Youth Career Exploration events.

Partner Youth Workforce Services: WSST has developed a strong network of community partners that offer services to in-school and out-of-school youth to supplement those available via WSST Workforce Centers. Our partners coordinate and leverage funding effectively to offer comprehensive service options to area youth. Key youth serving partners are identified in Table 20 below.

Table 20: Key Youth Workforce System Partners

Partner	Service Description	Service Community
Laredo College	Post-secondary education and training, and Adult Education and Literacy services.	WSST 3-county region
Bethany House	Offers temporary housing to assist low income and individuals in need. Other services include meals, clothing, case management, and general counseling, referrals, and support services.	WSST 3-county region
Communities in Schools of Laredo	Helps at-risk students improve in academics, attendance, and/or behavioral issues. Encourages students to stay in school, graduate, and prepare for post-secondary opportunities	Collocated in secondary schools in WSST 3-county region
Laredo Job Corps Center	A residential education and job training program that provides young adults, ages 16-24, with the skills and education they need to succeed in the workforce.	WSST 3-county region.
Habitat for Humanity	Addresses critical housing needs but also provides workforce development opportunities by offering skills training, employment, and partnerships that support individuals in building long-term career success.	WSST 3-county region

Serving Youth with Disabilities: WSST provides employment and training services to youth with disabilities in coordination with collocated TWC Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff. Our strong collaborative relationship with VR has allowed WSST to effectively serve youth with disabilities in South Texas through the Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) and subsidized work experience (year-round) programs, as well as through co-enrollment and joint service delivery.

In addition, WSST has established partnerships with agencies throughout our 3 service counties (1) to enhance the service options to youth with disabilities and (2) support them with accommodations for employment, training, and other program activities. These partner agencies include:

Table 21: Agency Partnerships

Partner	Service Description
Border Region Behavioral Health Center	Counseling services
El Metro	Paratransit
Ruth B Cowl Rehabilitation Center	Therapy and counseling services
U Can Work 2	Vocational counseling and job placement services
Let's Go Professional Staffing	Vocational counseling and job placement services
City of Laredo Blue Ribbon Committee for People with Disabilities	Advocates for individuals with disabilities by promoting awareness, education and securing resources for their physiological, psychological and social well-being; provides guidance to the City of Laredo officials regarding issues affecting people with disabilities.
Student Hire-Ability Navigator (SHN)	Support students with disabilities in their transition from school to work. The SHN serves as a bridge between educational institutions, employers, and community organizations to ensure that students with disabilities have the necessary resources and support to succeed in the workforce.
Valley Association for Independent Living (VAIL-Laredo)	A nonprofit organization that supports individuals with disabilities in Laredo, Hebbronville and Zapata. The organization focuses on promoting independence and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities through a variety of services and programs.

WSST will work diligently to expand and strengthen the network of partners and effective service options for individuals with disabilities.

Successful WSST Youth Models: Examples of innovative and successful youth service models in South Texas, include:

- The **Laredo YouthBuild Program** empowers young people aged 16 to 24 to overcome barriers by earning their GED or high school equivalency while gaining vocational training in fields like construction, healthcare, and technology. Youth engage in leadership development, mentoring, and community service, such as building affordable housing, fostering skills and confidence. Through partnerships like Workforce Solutions for South Texas, the program offers job placement, career counseling, and educational support, helping youth achieve self-sufficiency and long-term success.
- One notable initiative is the **Laredo Youth Collaborative Committee (LYCC)**, established in partnership with the Laredo Job Corps Center. The LYCC aims to provide youth with a deeper understanding of the American political system through active participation in local government, businesses, non-profit organizations, and other services. This collaboration facilitates open dialogue between youth and community representatives, addressing challenges and achieving goals pertinent to Laredo's younger population.
- **in collaboration with regional Independent School Districts, WSST invites employers and industry professionals** to share information about their businesses, available job opportunities, and what they look for in potential employees. With the use of Virtual Reality, students have access to Career Exploration by TransfrVR which allows them to try different potential careers. Career Navigators are available to help students assess their interests, skills, and strengths, guiding them toward careers that align with their passions and aptitudes while using tools from the JobsY'All such as the Texas Reality Check and Texas Career Check.

C. Coordination with Secondary and Postsecondary Education Programs

References: WIOA §108(b)(10); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(9) Boards must include a description of how the Board will coordinate workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid the duplication of services.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of how the Board will:

- coordinate its workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities; and
- coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services.

Strategic Coordination with Secondary and Postsecondary Education Programs: WSST has a history of active and successful collaboration throughout South Texas to align workforce investments with secondary and postsecondary education programs to improve transitions, coordinate strategies, and enhance services for students and job seekers. This alignment

supports the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan's Goal 3 by *improving access, facilitating program completion, earning credentials, and developing employability skills.*

Key Strategies and Initiatives

1. Knowledge Sharing and Leveraging Initiatives: WSST leverages our role as a convener to facilitate collaboration across educational institutions, ensuring alignment of programs and resources. Our strategies include:

- Promoting program alignment to enhance articulation agreements between institutions, increasing stackable and portable credential opportunities.
- Encouraging the development of dual credit opportunities and the use of short-term, industry-recognized credential training.
- Ongoing initiatives to streamline and enhance the efficiency of workforce and education service delivery, avoiding duplication and optimizing resources.

Examples of collaborative initiatives include:

- Educate Texas: A public-private alliance to improve college readiness and success, with a strong focus on STEM education through partnerships with local universities, businesses, and non-profits.
 - North American Advanced Manufacturing Research and Education Initiative (NAAMREI): A consortium advancing manufacturing education and training in the region, through partnerships including economic and workforce agencies, educational alliances, and private industry.
 - South Texas Environmental Education and Research Center (STEER): STEER connects environmental health, public health, and education to workforce readiness in health-related fields.
 - Excelencia in Education: A national initiative fostering Latino student success in higher education, supported locally by WSST and community partners.
 - United Way of Laredo: WSST partners with United Way to address community needs, encourage volunteerism, and leverage resources to support educational and workforce initiatives.
 - Laredo College: A public institution ranked among the highest in the state of Texas that provides quality education at a low tuition cost.
 - Laredo Job Corps Center: Job Corps provides free career training and education for low-income 16- through 24-year-olds. Students get the experience they need to begin a career or apprenticeship, go on to college, or join the military.
2. Collaborative Planning: WSST conducts joint service delivery planning with secondary and postsecondary institutions, as well as Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) providers, to:
- Reduce redundancies and eliminate service duplication.

- Aligning referral processes and creating seamless program pathways to provide customers with needed wraparound services.
 - Design mutually beneficial strategies that integrate workforce and educational resources effectively.
3. **Collective Impact:** Our collective impact approach leverages partnerships and funding streams to optimize the services available to customers and address the unique challenges and needs of our South Texas service communities. Examples include:
- **Laredo Disability Alliance Job Fair:** A collaborative event connecting individuals with disabilities to employers and support services. WSST partners with agencies such as Border Region MHMR, Goodwill Industries, and local school districts to provide inclusive opportunities.
 - **Mid Rio Grande Border Area Health Education Center (AHEC):** WSST partners with AHEC to expand training opportunities in health care and promote academic pathways, from high school programs like HOPE to continuing education for healthcare workers.
 - **Laredo College:** WSST partners with the Laredo College Workforce Development Center (WDC) to participate in job fairs tailored to Laredo College students and alumni, and introduce WSST services to that population.

Outcomes of Coordination: By engaging secondary and postsecondary education programs through these strategies, WSST achieves:

- **Integration of Services:** Tailored education and training services are efficiently integrated into the workforce system, ensuring comprehensive support for participants.
- **Elimination of Redundancies:** Our collaborative approach minimizes redundancies between partners and helps ensure efficient use of resources and makes services easier to engage for customers.
- **Enhanced Career Pathways:** Articulated pathways and transitions between education and workforce programs enable customers to move smoothly from education, advanced training, and employment and to continue progressing along their career pathway.

D. Child Care and Early Learning

References: 40 TAC §809.12

Boards must include a description of how the Board is strategically managing child care and early learning within the workforce system to enhance school readiness and strengthen and support the child care industry.

Efforts include:

- coordinating with employers, economic development programs, and other industry leaders to increase the awareness and importance of early learning as a workforce and economic development tool;
- supporting improved school readiness through higher-quality child care, including through the Texas Rising Star program and partnership opportunities; and
- supporting the needs of the child care industry, such as by providing assistance with business development or shared services, or by providing opportunities to support professional growth and career pathways for early education.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of how the Board will:

- incorporate and coordinate the design and management of the delivery of child care services with the delivery of other workforce employment, job training, and educational services;
- maximize the delivery and availability of safe and stable child care services that assist WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 13 families seeking to become independent from, or who are at risk of becoming dependent on, public assistance while parents are either working or attending a job training or educational program;
- use strategies for contracted slot agreements, including any local priorities and how the contracted slot agreements help increase access to high-quality care for targeted communities;
- develop and implement strategic quality improvement goals to enhance school readiness; and
- strengthen and support the child care industry

WSST integrates child care and early learning within workforce service delivery to enhance school readiness and strengthen the child care industry. The Board uses targeted strategies to ensure these services align with workforce, job training, and educational goals, and address the critical needs of the community while supporting economic development.

Coordination with Employers, Economic Development, and Industry Leaders:

- WSST collaborates with employers, economic development, and industry leaders to emphasize early learning as a vital component of workforce and economic development.
- Board staff engage in joint planning with community stakeholders to align service strategies and create a shared understanding of the importance of early learning in preparing the workforce pipeline.
- WSST partners with secondary and post-secondary institutions to offer programs that promote awareness and support early learning and school readiness.

Supporting School Readiness through High-Quality Child Care

- WSST operates quality improvement initiatives targeting both classroom and home environments. Programs like *FLIP-IT: Transforming Challenging Behavior Training and Literacy Program* are used to enhance children’s social-emotional skills, behavior regulation, and overall readiness for kindergarten.
- Child care programs providing Child Care Services (CCS) may participate in the *Texas Rising Star (TRS)* certification program. WSST supports providers through mentoring, professional development, and tailored training to meet TRS standards, ensuring a pipeline of quality early learning providers.
- WSST promotes *prekindergarten partnerships* to expand use of early learning opportunities and align educational pathways for young learners.

Maximizing Access to Safe and Stable Child Care Services

- WSST supports families transitioning to self-sufficiency by prioritizing services for parents who are working or enrolled in training or educational programs.
- Child Care Scholarships are available for parents searching for a job. This is a constant and collaborative team effort between Child Care Services staff and Employment Services staff.
- Contracted child care slot agreements increase access to high-quality care in underserved and target communities. The board focuses on increasing availability during non-traditional hours and addressing rural child care needs.

Strengthening the Child Care Industry

- WSST provides support to providers, including assistance with business development, shared services, and operational sustainability. Providers can access mentoring and technical assistance to enhance their business practices and meet rising community demands.
- We invest in professional development and incentives to retain skilled early childhood professionals.

Incentives for Early Childhood Professionals

- End-of-year and one-time bonuses ranging from \$750 to \$950 are provided to early childhood professionals, with additional enhancements for those in qualifying categories such as rural providers, home-based providers, and providers offering non-traditional care hours.
- Incentives are designed to promote staff retention, ensuring children receive consistent, high-quality care from familiar caregivers.

Mentoring and Support for Texas Rising Star Providers

As per WD Letter 23-22, WSST ensures compliance with mentoring requirements for Entry-Level CCS providers. These efforts include:

- Providing targeted technical assistance to help providers meet TRS standards.
- Ongoing guidance and training to ensure providers advance through TRS certification.
- Implementing a structured timeline for compliance and progress, ensuring quality benchmarks are met.
- Every year, the TRS team coordinates the Child Care Conference which provides training to providers and their staff to be up to date in tools to improve their teaching.

E. Transportation and Other Support Services

References: WIOA §108(b)(11); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(10)

Each Board must include a description of how the Board will provide transportation, including public transportation, and other appropriate support services in the workforce area in coordination with WIOA Title I workforce investment activities.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of how the Board will provide:

- transportation, including public transportation; and
- other support services

Transportation Services: WSST recognizes transportation is a critical barrier to participation in workforce services. Our strategies to overcome this challenge include:

1. Public Transportation: WSST provides customers with public transportation vouchers, bus passes, or reimbursement for public transit expenses to ensure consistent access to workforce programs, job interviews, and employment opportunities. This is a viable option in the Laredo metro area.
2. Private Transportation Support: For customers with limited access to public transit, WSST offers mileage reimbursement, gas cards, and car repair assistance to maintain reliable personal transportation.
3. Collaborative Partnerships: WSST partners with local public transit and community organizations, including El Metro Transit and El Águila Rural Transportation to offer affordable transit for program participants.
4. Proactive Planning for Rural Areas: works with community leaders and stakeholders in rural communities to offer unique solutions to address transportation challenges in communities without sufficient public transportation options. Examples include, and Jim Hogg and Zapata County Transportation to optimize routes for customers.

Other Support Services: WSST also offers support services to address additional barriers to ensure participants can fully engage workforce services, including:

1. Child Care: WSST offers child care scholarships for eligible families, prioritizing access to high-quality early learning programs through partnerships with Texas Rising Star (TRS) providers. We also offer training and mentoring to child care providers to enhance their quality ratings, supporting families with access to centers that meet high standards of care and school readiness.
2. Housing and Utility Assistance: WSST provides rent and utility assistance and as well as referrals to partner organizations for temporary housing, rental assistance, and utility support.
3. Work-Related Expenses: WSST offers financial support for uniforms, tools, certifications, and other job-related items to remove barriers to employment readiness.
4. Emergency Supports: WSST aids with unexpected emergencies, such as car repairs, medical needs, or housing crises, to prevent interruptions in workforce participation.
5. Technology and Connectivity Access: WSST provides access to laptops, internet stipends, and community technology hubs via referrals to local community partners.

F. Coordination of Adult Education and Literacy

References: WIOA §108(b)(13); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(12); WD 18-23, Change 2

Boards must include a description of how the Board will coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with AEL activities under WIOA Title II. Boards must also include the process used to review the local applications submitted under Title II, as consistent with WIOA §§107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA §232.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of:

- how the Board will coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with AEL activities under WIOA Title II, including the process used to review local applications submitted under WIOA Title II; and
- the local application review process.

WSST collaborates with Laredo College (LC), WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) grant recipient, to ensure seamless integration of workforce investment and AEL activities. This partnership includes participation in the local AEL Advisory Committee, which convenes monthly, to facilitate joint planning and service delivery. The goals of this collaboration include:

1. Complementary Funding and Program Integration:
 - Aligning WIOA Title I and Title II funding streams to ensure that services complement each other, maximizing the impact of resources.
 - Developing efficient referral processes among LC, WSST, and service providers to streamline participant access to services.

- Establishing co-enrollment and joint case management strategies to enhance participant outcomes.
- 2. Reduction of Redundancies in Service Delivery:
 - Coordinating efforts to minimize duplication in assessments, referrals, and service planning across partners.
 - Utilizing shared tools and processes to improve efficiency and ensure consistency in service delivery.
- 3. Shared Career Pathways:
 - Adopting a common Career Pathways framework to guide career and education advising.
 - Promoting continuity in service planning by aligning workforce and AEL services.
- 4. Leveraging Multi-Agency Funding:
 - Strategically utilizing non-WIOA funding sources alongside WIOA Title I and II programs to expand the availability and impact of services.
- 5. GED Program:
 - A no-cost flexible program available through WSST

Review of Local Applications: WSST is included in the review process for local AEL applications and proposals, ensuring alignment with WIOA requirements and local workforce development goals. This includes involvement in procurement processes related to Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) funding.

Key elements of WSST’s review process include:

1. Ensuring Consistency with Local Plans:
 - Reviewing applications to confirm that proposed AEL services align with local workforce development plans and priorities.
2. Providing Technical Assistance and Feedback:
 - Advising applicants on opportunities to enhance the alignment of resources with AEL and workforce services.
 - Offering technical assistance, training, and relevant information to improve proposal quality and integration with local initiatives.
3. Facilitating Cross-Agency Alignment:
 - Encouraging applicants to adopt strategies that integrate AEL and workforce services, such as shared Career Pathways and co-enrollment models.
 - Promoting resource-sharing and collaboration to improve service delivery and outcomes.

By serving as a reviewer and advisor, WSST ensures that local AEL activities are not only consistent with regional plans but also contribute to an efficient service delivery system that addresses the education and employment needs of the South Texas community.

Part 6: Adult and Dislocated Workers

A. Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 14

References: WIOA §108(b)(7); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(6) Boards must include a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the workforce area.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

- A description and assessment of the type and availability of adult, dislocated worker employment and training activities
- A list of assessment instruments (tools) used for adults and dislocated workers

The WSST Board operates a certified one-stop Workforce Center in the City of Laredo (Webb County) and a satellite Workforce Centers in Zapata (Zapata County). The two Workforce Centers provide access to more than 90% of the region's residents within a 10-mile radius. Both Workforce Centers are equipped to provide the full range of WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker program services to customers.

Table 22: Adult and Dislocated Worker Service Locations

Workforce Center	Location	County
Laredo Workforce Center	1406 Jacman Rd, Suite A Laredo, TX 78041	Webb
Zapata Workforce Center	605 US Hwy 83, Suite B Zapata, TX 78076	Zapata
Hebronville Services	Workforce Virtual Station, Jim Hogg Courthouse Annex Building, 102 E Tilley St.	Jim Hogg

In addition to WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, the WSST Board also operates special programs and initiatives (competitively funded or through designated allocations) to expand the services available to Adult and Dislocated Worker customers.

WSST also leverages partnerships with community-based organizations throughout the 3-county region that expand the employment and training services to adult and dislocated worker populations. Key WSST partners include:

- Laredo College
- Training Providers (LHCT, Grace Trucking, Astudillo Trucking, Upscale Trucking)
- South Texas Training
- Health Career Institute of Laredo

Workforce Solutions for South Texas (WSST) uses specific assessment tools to better understand the skills, interests, and support needs of adults and dislocated workers. Two primary tools used in this process are CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems), and the O*NET Interest Profiler.

CASAS is used to assess the foundational academic skills in reading, math, and English language and identifies whether participants are basic skills deficient, and whether someone is ready to enter occupational training or needs Adult Basic Education (ABE) or English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction first.

The Interest Profiler is a career exploration tool that helps individuals understand their work-related interests and match them to potential career options and strongest interest areas (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, or Conventional). The Interest Profiler helps align job seekers' interests with demand occupations in the local labor market. Results are used by career navigators and business service representatives to guide career pathway planning and training selection.

B. Service Priority

References: 20 CFR §679.560(b)(21)

Boards must include the Board policy to ensure that priority for adult individualized career services and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, as consistent with WIOA §134(c)(3)(E) and 20 CFR §680.600, along with veterans and foster youth, according to the priority order outlined in the WIOA Guidelines for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth. Boards must also include a list of any Board-established priority groups, if any.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of the Board policy to ensure priority for adult individualized career services and training services will be given to the following:

- Recipients of public assistance
- Other low-income individuals
- Individuals who are basic skills deficient
- Veterans
- Foster youth
- List of Board priority groups (if any)

WSST Service Priority for Individualized Career Services and Training Services Policy, dated March 18, 2024 (reference WD 01-21, Change 1) is compliant with WIOA §134 (c) (3) (E) and with §680.600 of the Final Regulations, as well as the TWC Workforce Innovation and

Opportunity Act: Guidelines for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth. WSST policy meets the requirement that, “individualized career services and training services must be given on a priority basis, regardless of funding levels; to public assistance recipients; other low- income adults; and Individuals who are basic skills deficient.

WSST priority of service is provided first, to eligible veterans and eligible spouses who also receive public assistance, meet low-income guidelines, or are considered basic skills deficient. Second, priority is given to foster youth and former foster youth, who meet the same economic or educational criteria. Third are all other individuals who receive public assistance, are low-income, or are basic skills deficient. After, priority is extended to all other eligible veterans and eligible spouses, followed by all other foster youth and former foster youth.

Part 7: Fiscal Agent, Grants, and Contracts

A. Fiscal Agent

References: WIOA §108(b)(15); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(14)

Boards must identify the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds described in WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III), as determined by the CEOs or the governor under WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i).

Minimum Plan Requirements:

- The entity responsible for disbursement of grant funds

The South Texas Workforce Development Board dba Workforce Solutions for South Texas (WSST) is responsible for disbursement of grant funds as described in WIOA §107 (d) (12) (B) (i) (III), as determined by the chief elected official or the governor under WIOA §107 (d) (12) (B) (i). The Board works with area partners and stakeholders to provide consistent delivery of associated services throughout the 3-county workforce service area.

B. Subgrants and Contracts

References: WIOA §108(b)(16); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(15) WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 15

Boards must include a description of the competitive process that will be used to award the subgrants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

- A description of the competitive process used to award subgrants and contracts

The competitive process by which WSST awards sub-grants and contracts for WIOA Title I services are detailed in the Board Procurement Manual. The Manual, and included policies

and procedures, comply with applicable administrative requirements as outlined in the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Financial Manual for Grants and Contracts (FMGC) and relevant TWC policies. An overview of the procurement process is included in Table 23 below.

Table 23: Workforce Solutions for South Texas Procurement Steps

Step	Description
1	Advise WSST Board of Procurement
2	Planning – Establish Timeline, Statement of Work, Criteria and Weights for RFP Drafts. Develop Needs Assessment with estimated amount
3	Procurement ready for issue to Vendor’s List
4	Public Notice in Newspaper, on Board website, and e-mailed to bidder’s list
5	Pre-Proposal Conference – Virtual or on-site - sign-in sheet, document questions
6	Release Questions/Answers – e-mail to pre-proposal attendees, and put on website
7	Courtesy Letter of Intent submitted
8	RFQ for Independent Evaluators, selection and contract, conflict of interest form submitted, and RFP, Q/A and evaluation tool provided
9	Proposals submitted – date and time stamped – checked for responsiveness, cost comparison, references checked
10	Send proposals over night to selected Independent Evaluators after Conflict of Interest form submitted
11	Evaluation forms submitted and points are aggregated and averaged – evaluator conference call – evaluation phase one completed – Evaluators submit original signed copies and invoice – Evaluators provided Fed-ex number to return proposals
12	Evaluation Phase Two – Questions established based on result of Phase One – same questions and same time asked of each proposer that meets the minimum average score. Conflict of Interest Forms from Board Evaluators submitted. Board committee has 10 points in this phase. Points turned in by each evaluator is aggregated, averaged and added to Phase One average score with top score recommended to Board
13	Recommendation is made to WSST Board for Action.
14	Finalize the Procurement File with all required documentation clearly labeled
15	Pre-award
16	Transition and contract negotiations begin
17	Contract signed by Executive Director and Board President

Part 8: Performance

A. Board Performance Targets

References: WIOA §108(b)(17); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(16)

Boards must include a description of the local levels of performance that were negotiated with TWC and the CEOs, consistent with WIOA §116(c), that will be used to measure the performance of the workforce area and for measuring the performance of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), eligible providers under WIOA Title I subtitle B, and the one-stop delivery system in the workforce area.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of local levels of performance to be used to measure performance of:

- the workforce area; and
- local fiscal agent (when appropriate)

WSST negotiates performance expectations with TWC annually to measure the performance of the local workforce system. Negotiated performance measures are included in contracts WSST service providers. The following performance measures were negotiated for BCY25 in accordance with WIOA § 116(c):

Table 24: Performance Measures

Measure	BCY25 Negotiated Target
15 Siloed WIOA Measures	
Employed Qtr. 2 Post Exit - Adult	74%
Employed Qtr. 4 Post Exit - Adult	75.40%
Credential Rate - Adult	85%
Median Earnings Qtr. 2 Post Exit - Adult	\$7,030.00
Measurable Skills Gain - Adult	69.70%
Employed Qtr. 2 Post Exit - DW	81.10%
Employed Qtr. 4 Post Exit - DW	78.30%
Credential Rate - DW	85%
Median Earnings Qtr. 2 Post Exit - DW	\$11,090.00
Measurable Skills Gain - DW	75%
Employed/Enrolled Qtr. 2 Post Exit - Youth	76.30%
Employed/Enrolled Qtr. 4 Post Exit - Youth	78.90%
Credential Rate – Youth	78.90%
Median Earnings Qtr. 2 Post Exit - Youth	\$3,900.00

Measurable Skills Gain – Youth	64.30%
Employed/Enrolled Qtr. 2 Post Exit - Active Job Seeker New Employment Connection Rate	61.14%
Employed/Enrolled Qtr. 2 -4 Post Exit – Maintaining Employment Connection Rate	39.92%
# of Employers Receiving Texas Talent Assistance (#TTA)	2,145
Credential Rate – All C&T Participants	71%
Claimant Reemployment within 10 Weeks	60%
Texas Talent Assistance (TTA)	2,145
Successful Texas Talent Assistance Rate (STTAR)	55.17%
Choices Full Engagement Rate	50%
Average Children Served per Day	2,884
Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit - NCP	65%
Employed/Enrolled Q2-4 Post-Exit - NCP	50%
RESEA Outreach & Scheduling Rate	100%
RESEA Orientation Rate	100%
RESEA Timely Provision of Services	100%
RESEA Initial Appointment Rate	77%
RESEA Failure to Report Rate	23%

Local Measures: In addition to TWC negotiated performance standards, WSST may include local performance measures and service level expectations in contracts with our workforce service providers. Local measures are intended to ensure that the priorities of the Board, partners, and stakeholders are reflected and emphasized in operation and management of the local workforce system.

Fiscal Agent: WSST does not subcontract Fiscal Agent services. No additional measures are required to monitor Fiscal Agent performance.

Part 9: Training and Services

A. Individual Training Accounts

References: WIOA §108(b)(19); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(18)

Boards must include a description of how the training services outlined in WIOA §134 will be provided through the use of individual training accounts (ITAs), including if the Board will use contracts for training services, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of ITAs under that chapter, and how the Board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of how the training services are provided.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of the following:

- How training services will be provided using ITAs in accordance with WD Letter 14-19, Change 2
- How contracts for training services will be coordinated (if contracts are used)
- How the Board will ensure informed customer choice

WSST provides training services using Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) in full compliance with WIOA §134, WD Letter 14-19, Change 2, and WSST Board Policy 004-2003, Change 3. ITAs are made available to WIOA Title I eligible customers to support participation in approved training programs listed on the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Funds associated with ITAs are utilized to cover tuition costs and other training-related expenses, including testing fees, books, and materials.

Process for ITA Provision: WSST has established a proven process to ensure ITA allocation is systematic, transparent, and aligned with customer needs:

1. Development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP):
 - Customers work with their Career Navigators to develop an IEP, ensuring they meet the following conditions:
 - Inability to secure suitable employment without training.
 - Demonstrated need for training to achieve career goals.
 - Possession of skills and qualifications required for successful program completion.
 - Satisfactory performance on interest, aptitude, and skills assessments to confirm compatibility with the chosen career field.
2. Emphasis on Informed Customer Choice:
 - WSST empowers customers to drive their training decisions by providing clear guidance and resources while maintaining customer choice as a core principle. Career Counselors act as advisors, facilitating informed decision-making at every stage.
3. Access to Target Occupations and Eligible Training Providers (ETP):
 - Customers receive a list of high-demand target occupations and approved ETPs offering training aligned with regional workforce needs.
 - Consideration is given to customers considering training for occupations outside local target lists when relocation is a viable option.
4. Labor Market and Performance Data:
 - Customers are provided comprehensive labor market data, as well as performance and cost metrics for available training programs. This ensures they have the necessary information to evaluate the return on investment of their training choices.
5. Active Customer Research and Engagement:

- Customers are required to conduct research on ETPs, including enrollment processes, outcomes, costs, prerequisites, and campus environments.
 - Visits to training facilities and potential employer sites are strongly recommended to familiarize customers with occupational requirements.
6. Assessment of Financial Sustainability:
- Customers must demonstrate their ability to sustain themselves and/or their families during the training period. This includes verifying financial resources and identifying support mechanisms.
7. Pursuit of Supplemental Funding:
- Customers are required to apply for additional financial assistance, including the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), to maximize available resources and reduce financial barriers.

Coordination of Contracts for Training Services: Currently, WSST does not anticipate utilizing contracts for training services as a supplement or replacement for ITAs. If training contracts are considered, WSST will ensure they are coordinated seamlessly with ITA usage, adhering to WIOA regulations and maintaining customer choice.

Ensuring Informed Customer Choice: WSST is committed to ensuring customers are equipped with the knowledge and tools to make informed training decisions. WSST achieves this by:

- Providing access to clear, transparent information about training options, labor market trends, and program outcomes.
- Offering individualized career counseling to guide customers in aligning training choices with their career goals.
- Encouraging hands-on research and engagement with training providers and employers to ensure the chosen path aligns with customer needs and aspirations.

B. ITA Limitations

References: 20 CFR §663.420; WD Letter 14-19, Change 2WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 16 Boards may impose limits on the duration and amount of ITAs, of which such limitations must be described in the Board Plan. If the state or Board chooses to impose limitations, such limitations must not be implemented in a manner that undermines the WIOA requirement that training services are provided in a manner that maximizes customer choice in the selection of an Eligible Training Provider. Exceptions to ITA limitations may be provided for individual cases and must be described in Board policies.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

- Identify whether the Board imposed ITA limits
- Provide a description of the limitations, if applicable
- Provide a description detailing how customer training services selection is continuously maximized despite ITA limitations

- Provide a description of any exceptions to ITA limitations and the process for requesting an exception

WSST has established an ITA funding maximum (limit) of \$4,000 per training that is not to exceed 24 months in duration. These limitations are designed to ensure equitable distribution of resources while maintaining alignment with WIOA requirements to maximize customer choice in selecting an Eligible Training Provider (ETP). Additionally, WSST's target occupation list naturally guides the types of training programs available to customers through the ETPL.

Despite ITA limitations, WSST implements a variety of strategies to ensure customers have robust access to training opportunities and maintain the flexibility to make informed choices:

1. Leveraging Additional Financial Resources: WSST actively assists customers in securing supplemental funding such as Pell Grants, other federal and state grants, and scholarships. These additional resources reduce the financial burden on ITAs, allowing customers to pursue their preferred training programs without compromise.
2. Short-Term Credentialing and Pre-Vocational Training Partnerships: WSST collaborates with post-secondary institutions to expand the availability of short-term credentialing programs and pre-vocational training services. These programs are cost-effective and allow customers to quickly gain certifications aligned with high-demand occupations.
3. Strategic Coordination of ITA Funds: For customers pursuing long-term training programs, such as registered nursing or advanced technical certifications, WSST strategically applies ITA funding to support critical phases of their training. For example, ITA funds may be allocated to cover tuition and costs in the latter stages of multi-year programs, ensuring continuity in training while leveraging other funding sources for initial phases.
4. Emphasis on Work-Based Learning Opportunities: WSST prioritizes work-based learning models, such as apprenticeships and on-the-job training (OJT), which leverage employer investments and reduce reliance on ITA funding. These opportunities allow customers to earn wages while acquiring industry-relevant skills, creating a pathway to sustainable employment.
5. Flexible Use of Target Occupation List: While the target occupation list serves as a guiding framework, WSST provides provisions for customers who demonstrate a willingness and ability to relocate or secure employment outside the local labor market. This ensures broader access to training programs that align with their career aspirations.

Exceptions to ITA Limitations: WSST's local policy allows for exceptions to the established ITA funding and duration limits on a case-by-case basis by the contracted service provider, provided sufficient justification is documented. The process for requesting an exception includes:

- Submission of a request by the customer or Career Navigator with need for an exception.
- Evaluation of the request based on factors such as labor market alignment, customer's career goals, and financial sustainability.
- Approval by the contracted service provider's management team, ensuring compliance with WSST Board policy and WIOA regulations.

Part 10: Apprenticeship

A. Registered Apprenticeship Programs

Each Board must include a description of how the Board will encourage Registered Apprenticeship programs within its workforce area to register with the Eligible Training Provider System to receive WIOA funding.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

- A description of how the Board will encourage Registered Apprenticeship programs to register with the Eligible Training Provider System to receive WIOA funding

WSST recognizes the critical role Registered Apprenticeship programs can play in addressing skills gaps, reducing turnover, and creating structured career pathways for job seekers. While there are limited Registered Apprenticeship programs currently available in South Texas — and no opportunities are listed on the TWC Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)—the region exhibits characteristics that indicate strong potential for apprenticeship expansion, including:

- Mid- to high-skilled occupations with persistent skill shortages
- Industries with high turnover
- Sectors facing retirement-driven labor gaps
- Need for upskilling to keep pace with technological advancements
- Difficulty attracting current and emerging talent

To encourage development of Registered Apprenticeships, WSST has implemented a strategic plan that follows the Apprenticeship USA and Apprenticeship Texas framework outlined in *Advancing Apprenticeship as a Workforce Strategy: An Assessment and Planning Tool for the Public Workforce System*, which includes:

1. Exploring apprenticeship as a talent solution
2. Building partnerships with industry, education, and workforce stakeholders
3. Designing high-quality apprenticeship programs
4. Defining roles and responsibilities for program implementation
5. Evaluating outcomes and improving program effectiveness

Employer Participation and ETPL Registration: WSST is actively building employer awareness and promoting Registered Apprenticeship programs, highlighting the benefits including registration with the ETPL and access Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding. Our outreach efforts include:

- Employer Education & Awareness: Targeted outreach to businesses in key industry sectors to highlight the benefits of apprenticeship programs, including access to workforce funding, credentialing opportunities, and potential tax credits.

- **Partnership Development:** Convening employers, training institutions, and partners to align workforce training efforts and encourage the development of industry-specific apprenticeship models.
- **Technical Assistance and Support:** Assisting employers in designing, registering, and implementing apprenticeship programs in compliance with U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) standards and ETPL requirements.

Commitment to Expanding Apprenticeship Opportunities: As WSST continues to develop apprenticeship options in South Texas, the Board commits to actively supporting program creation, employer engagement, and participant success through the following initiatives:

1. **WIOA Funding:** Supporting classroom instruction through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and On-the-Job Training (OJT) funding to offset employer training costs.
2. **Supportive Services:** Assisting apprentices with supportive services (e.g., transportation, childcare, and work-related expenses) to ensure program retention and completion.
3. **Pre-Apprenticeship Options:** Working with local education providers to establish pre-apprenticeships that prepare job seekers for full apprenticeship opportunities.
4. **YouthBuild and Job Corps:** Expanding outreach to young adults and individuals from diverse backgrounds, connecting them to apprenticeship career pathways.
5. **Educational Institutions:** Educating community college and training partners on Texas Education Code, Chapter 133, which provides state funding to support related classroom instruction for registered apprenticeships.
6. **Local, TWC, and DOL Resources:** Utilizing local, state, and federal apprenticeship resources, including technical assistance and best practices, to develop and expand apprenticeship options.

B. Apprenticeship Texas

Each Board must include a description of the Board’s strategy and commitment to support Apprenticeship Texas efforts across the state, as applicable.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

- A description of the Board’s strategy and commitment to support Apprenticeship Texas.

The WSST Board is committed to supporting Apprenticeship Texas as part of our broader strategy to expand registered apprenticeship opportunities in the region. Recognizing that limited Apprenticeship programs operate in the area, the WSST Board is proactively working to develop these opportunities by leveraging Apprenticeship Texas resources and guidance.

Link: <https://www.twc.texas.gov/programs/apprenticeship/apprenticeshiptexas>

WSST's strategy to support Apprenticeship Texas aligns with state and federal priorities, ensuring that workforce development efforts integrate apprenticeship as a core strategy for closing the skills gap. Our approach includes the following key commitments:

1. Employer Engagement and Partnership Development
 - WSST outreaches employers to educate them on the benefits of apprenticeships and connects them to resources to assist them in adding apprenticeships to their human capital strategy.
 - WSST partners with industry and business associations, and economic development organizations to identify high-demand jobs with skills shortages that would benefit from apprenticeship options.
 - Employer partners support in designing high-quality apprenticeship models aligned with Apprenticeship Texas standards and best practices.
2. Program Development and Expansion
 - WSST actively facilitates design and implementation of registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs with our employer and education partners, focusing on industry sectors identified as critical to the region's economy.
 - WSST leverages Apprenticeship Texas resources, along with funding from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), to increase employer participation in apprenticeships.
 - WSST supports creation of pre-apprenticeships, ensuring that underrepresented and disadvantaged populations have access to apprenticeship career pathways.
3. Leveraging WIOA and Other Funding Streams
 - WSST commits to using WIOA Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and On-the-Job Training (OJT) to support apprenticeships, reducing employer training costs and ensuring workforce customers have access to high-quality training.
 - WSST works with educational partners to maximize funding under Texas Education Code, Chapter 133, which supports the classroom instruction for registered apprenticeships.
 - WSST continues to pursue additional local, state, and federal resources to expand apprenticeship opportunities in South Texas.
4. Youth and Underserved Population Outreach
 - WSST partners with YouthBuild, Job Corps, and community-based organizations to promote apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities to youth, including those from historically underrepresented populations.
5. Performance Evaluation and Continuous Improvement
 - WSST integrates data collection and evaluation of outcomes into our apprenticeship initiatives to identify opportunities for continuous improvement.
 - WSST works with TWC and Apprenticeship Texas to analyze apprenticeship outcomes, ensuring alignment with workforce system goals.

WSST supports Apprenticeship Texas as a critical workforce strategy to strengthen training opportunities employer competitiveness in South Texas. The Board commits to participate

in Apprenticeship Texas networking events, technical assistance sessions, and best practice sharing initiatives to support apprenticeship expansion in the region.

Part 11: Public Comment

References: WIOA §108(d); 20 CFR §679.550(b) and §679.560(b) and (e) Boards must provide a description of the public comment process, including:

- making copies of the proposed local plan available to the public through electronic and other means, such as public hearings and local news media;
- an opportunity for comment by members of the public, including representatives of WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 17 business, labor organizations, and education;
- providing at least a 15-day, but no more than a 30-day period for comment on the plan before its submission to TWC, beginning on the date that the proposed plan is made available, before its submission to TWC.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

- Describe the public comment period process
- Provide any comments received; or a statement that no public comments were received WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 18

The WSST Board ensured the public had the opportunity to provide comment on the Strategic Plan for Program Years 2025–2028.

WSST placed a public notice on the WSST website and in the Laredo Morning Times on February 12, 2025 to advise the public of the availability of the WSST Plan and opportunity to comment. The public comment period began on February 12, 2025 and ended on February 26, 2025. Copies of the Strategic Plan were available for pickup at the WSST Administrative Office as well as a PDF copy for download on the WSST web site.

In addition, prior to the public comment period, WSST held a survey interview with local employers and other workforce partners from the 3-county area to solicit input for the WSST Plan, attendees were advised about the public comment period for the plan.

No public comments were received during the Public Comment period. The Chief Elected Officials met virtually and in person to review and approve the Strategic Plan for Program Years 2025–2028. WSST Board approved the Plan via a unanimous vote at during the Board of Directors meeting held on February 27, 2025.



**Public Notice
Strategic Plan 2025-2028**

Workforce Solutions for South Texas (WSST) Board hereby announces that the Strategic Plan addressing fiscal years 2025 - 2028 will be available for public comment from February 12, 2025 – February 26, 2025. Interested parties may view and download a copy of the proposed plan at www.southtexasworkforce.org (click on the About Us Tab and select Strategic Plan) WSST Board is responsible for the planning, oversight and implementation of federally funded workforce development programs in Jim Hogg, Webb and Zapata Counties.

Comments regarding the plan may be submitted in writing to the address listed below, or sent via e-mail to: strategicplan@southtexasworkforce.org no later than 12:00 PM CST on February 26, 2025.

Workforce Solutions for South Texas
500 E. Mann Rd. Suite B5
Laredo, Texas 78041

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Relay Texas: (800)735-2989 (TDD) or (800)735-2988(Voice) or 711

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Appendix: Texas Workforce Investment Council Requirements Local Board Plan Requirements for Alignment to the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan

Requirement for Workforce Systemwide Alignment

State law requires local workforce development boards (local board) to adopt a plan that “sets broad goals and objectives for all workforce development programs in the local area consistent with statewide goals, objectives, and performance standards,”¹ as outlined in the workforce system strategic plan, *Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031*.

The Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council) reviews each board plan to ensure that local goals and objectives are consistent with the workforce system strategic plan. Under state law and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the Council is charged with recommending the local board plans to the Governor for consideration and approval.

Demonstrating Local Alignment with Texas’ Workforce System Strategic Plan

The local board planning process highlights the importance and interdependence of the constituents and partners of the Texas workforce system. Local boards oversee the delivery of workforce programs and services and are essential in both the development and implementation of system goals and objectives in the system strategic plan. The planning requirements help local boards inform the Council of innovative practices and articulate how local plans translate the workforce system strategic plan into local action that moves the system forward. Local board responses apprise the Council—and, with the Council’s recommendation, the Governor—of system alignment, including program implementation, strategic initiatives, and innovative practices. All 28 boards will be represented in the briefing for the approval of the local plans and subsequent Council recommendation to the Governor for consideration for approval in the spring of 2025. Board responses may be included in the Council briefing materials verbatim.

Board response cover the three strategic opportunities and four system goals in *Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031* that focus system partners on the Council’s mission to produce an agile and resilient workforce. Building on a foundation of continuous innovation and increased collaboration, the system plan calls for accelerated engagement around three strategic opportunities: engagement of employers, improving outcomes for Texans with barriers, and use of data to support investment decisions. Each of these envisions a desirable future state for Texas and lays out essential actions to be implemented that support system goals and stronger outcomes across the Texas workforce system.

The system goals drive accelerated action by system partners in service to Texas employers, learners, partners, and those with policy and planning responsibilities, as follows:

- Employers System Goal: Accelerate the delivery of relevant education and training programs to meet the demand of employers. WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 19
- Learners System Goal: Accelerate the expansion of and access to work-based skill and knowledge acquisition to respond to the needs of learners.
- Partners System Goal: Accelerate the development and use of models to support and build system partners' capacity, responsiveness, continuous improvement, and decision-making.
- Policy and Planning Goal: Accelerate the availability of relevant workforce, education, and other data sets and the use of applied analytics to evaluate program outcomes to respond to the needs of policy makers and planners. (Texas Government Code Sec. 2308.304, Local Plan.).

Directions for Demonstrating Alignment with the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan

Local board plan responses must demonstrate alignment with the workforce system plan and, therefore, require both summary information and citations to the strategies and initiatives that advance progress towards the workforce system goals in *Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031*. Please refer to the workforce system plan for definitions of specific terms.

1. Provide a summary describing how the processes, activities, or initiatives in the local board plan align with the specific system goal and objective and each strategic opportunity. Response guidelines are provided.
2. Accurately cite the referenced information in the local board plan by providing the corresponding page number(s) in the plan.

System Goals and Objectives

1. Employers Goal – Delivery of Relevant Education and Training Programs

Describe local board activities, initiatives, or processes that accelerate the delivery of relevant education and training programs to meet employers' needs, specifically by increasing:

- upskilling and reskilling programs that address employers' needs for middle skill workers,
- adult learners transitioning to employment through integrated education and training programs, and
- attainment of short-term credentials in programs aligned with high-demand occupations.

Response should address the following:

- the institution and/or expansion of upskilling and reskilling programs to meet employers' needs for middle-skill workers,

- the identification and delivery of programs, including with adult education and literacy providers, that support attainment of short-term credentials, industry-based certifications, and licenses,
- populations that require supportive services to improve program completion, certification or attainment of short-term credentials, and employment, and WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 20
- data used to track reskilling and upskilling program enrollments and outcomes, including program completions, attainment of short-term credentials and industry-based certifications or licenses, and employment directly related to the credential, license, or certification.

The Workforce Solutions for South Texas (WSST) Board is committed to the use of education and training programs that directly align with employer needs. By investing in upskilling, reskilling, and short-term credentialing, WSST ensures a responsive workforce system that supports regional economic growth and job seeker success.

Alignment with Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan: WSST initiatives align to the Employers System Goal of the Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031 by focusing on:

- Expanding upskilling and reskilling programs that address middle-skill workforce shortages.
- Enhancing adult learner transition pathways via integrated education and training programs.
- Increasing attainment of short-term credentials that support high-demand occupations.

Board Activities, Initiatives, and Strategies: WSST invests in employer-driven initiatives via targeted training investments, industry collaboration, and program innovation. The Board's approach includes:

1. **Expansion of Upskilling and Reskilling Programs**

- Partnering with Laredo College, regional Independent School Districts, and employers to develop customized training programs aligned to priority industry sectors. *(p. 7)*
- Increasing funding and employer involvement in work-based learning (WBL), On-the-Job Training (OJT), and Apprenticeship programs. *(p. 7)*
- Supporting incumbent worker and skills development fund training to help employers retain and progress their workforce. *(p. 50)*

2. **Short-Term Credential and Industry-Based Certification Attainment**

- Strengthening Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) partnerships via support for contextualized learning models that effectively integrate industry-recognized skills, certifications, and credentials. *(p. 9)*
- Leveraging Texas Education Code, Chapter 133 funding to expand apprenticeship-related instruction in high-demand fields. *(p. 76)*

- Promoting Career and Technical Education (CTE) and dual-credit programs in collaboration with secondary schools to increase industry certification attainment. (p. 35)
- 3. Providing Supportive Services to Promote Completion and Employment**
 - Ensuring access to wraparound supportive services such as childcare assistance, transportation subsidies, and crisis assistance to improve program retention rates. (p. 64)
 - Strengthening partnership and coordination with YouthBuild, Job Corps, and community-based organizations to assist underserved populations in obtaining in-demand credentials. (p. 58)
- 4. Tracking Data to Measure Impact and Drive Decision-Making**
 - Utilizing Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) labor market data to track program enrollments, completion, credential attainment, and employment rates. (p. 42)
 - Implementing continuous improvement strategies to assess employer satisfaction and ensure program relevance. (p. 67)

WSST is committed to ensuring secondary and post-secondary training programs align with current and projected employer demand and contribute to a skilled, agile, and resilient workforce. WSST supports sustainable workforce strategies that meet both employer and job seeker needs by leveraging Apprenticeship Texas, the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), and industry partnerships.

2. Learners Goal – Expansion of Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship

Describe local board activities, initiatives, or processes that are expanding work-based experiences, including apprenticeship, to accelerate skills and knowledge acquisition that improves system outcomes for learners.

Response should address the following:

- work-based learning opportunities with system stakeholders as a pre-employment strategy for youth and adults, including those requiring supportive services and resources,
- the expansion of the employer network participating in and sponsoring work-based learning opportunities, including registered and industry-recognized apprenticeship programs, and partnerships that address regular engagement with employers and system stakeholders, including collaboration with a Regional Convener for the Tri-Agency Texas Regional Pathways Network and input on the quality of existing apprenticeship programs and development of new programs.

The Workforce Solutions for South Texas (WSST) Board is committed to expanding work-based learning (WBL) and apprenticeship opportunities that accelerate skill development and career progression for our youth and adult customers. WSST ensures system customers have access to structured, high-quality training experiences for in-demand careers by continuously building and strengthening partnerships with employers, educational institutions, and system stakeholders.

Alignment with the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan: WSST initiatives align to the Learners System Goal of the Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031 by:

- Expanding work-based learning (WBL) opportunities that serve as pre-employment pathways for youth and adults.
- Growing the network of employers sponsoring apprenticeships and industry-recognized WBL programs.
- Strengthening our partnership and employer engagement strategies to ensure continuous improvement and expansion of opportunities.

Board Activities, Initiatives, and Strategies

1. **Expanding Work-Based Learning as a Pre-Employment Strategy:** WSST has developed WBL opportunities that provide practical experience, bridge the skills gap, and connect customers with real-world work environments. Key initiatives include:

- *Youth Work-Based Learning Programs:*
 - Partnering with secondary and post-secondary training providers to program WBL opportunities including internships, job shadowing, work experience, and career exploration activities into career and technical education (CTE) programs. (p. 7)
 - Promoting early WBL programs such as internships and work-study programs to build work skills and gain experience before graduation. (p. 35)
 - Increasing pre-apprenticeship opportunities to prepare customers, particularly youth, for Registered Apprenticeship Programs. (p. 76)
 - Partnering with post-secondary education partners such as Laredo College to strengthen Capstone Projects, Cooperative Education (Co-Ops), Job Shadowing, and Clinical Observations. (p. 36)
- *Adult Work-Based Learning Programs:*
 - Expanding On-the-Job Training and Incumbent Worker Training opportunities to assist customers in gaining industry experience while earning a wage. (p. 50)
 - Enhancing co-enrollment opportunities with Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) programs to integrate contextualized learning into workforce training. (p. 9)
 - Providing job coaching and mentorship opportunities for customers with barriers to employment. (p. 57)
- *Supportive Services for WBL Participants:*
 - Ensuring access to childcare, transportation, crisis assistance, and intensive career coaching to help customers successfully complete work-based training. (p. 64)
 - Partnering with YouthBuild, Job Corps, and community partners to connect hard to serve and underserved populations with WBL and pre-apprenticeships. (p. 58)

2. **Expanding Employer Networks and Apprenticeships:** WSST engages with our employer partners to increase apprenticeship program participation by:

- Engaging employers in high-demand industry sectors to establish and expand Registered Apprenticeship Programs and Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Programs. (p. 76)
- Encouraging local businesses to utilize WIOA funding and ETPL status to engage apprenticeship and on-the-job training opportunities. (p. 77)
- Promoting the Apprenticeship Texas initiative to raise awareness about the benefits of apprenticeship programs, and funding support. (p. 77)
- Leveraging industry partnerships to expand pre-apprenticeships that connect with full apprenticeship opportunities and employment. (p. 76)

3. **Strengthening Regional Partnerships and System Collaboration:** WSST actively collaborates with stakeholders to ensure availability of impactful WBL opportunities. Key partnerships include:

- *Tri-Agency Texas Regional Pathways Network:*
 - WSST partners with regional partners to develop high-quality career pathway initiatives that align with current and projected workforce needs. (p. 7)
 - WSST participates in regional strategy discussions to ensure WBL programs meet employer expectations and workforce demands. (p. 50)
- *Engagement with Economic Development Partners:*
 - WSST collaborates with regional Economic Development Corporations (EDCs), professional and industry associations, and chambers of commerce to drive employer engagement in WBL and apprenticeship expansion. (p. 50)
 - Employer roundtables, panels, surveys, and roundtables inform WSST service improvements and enhance employer participation. (p. 50)
- *Feedback on Apprenticeship Program Quality and Development:*
 - WSST gathers employer and participant feedback to assess the quality of existing apprenticeships and identify opportunities for new program development. (p. 76)
 - WSST provides technical assistance to employers and training providers to ensure apprenticeship programs meet state and federal standards. (p. 77)

WSST is dedicated to expanding WBL and apprenticeship opportunities that prepare customers for in demand and emerging career pathways. By aligning efforts with Apprenticeship Texas, the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative, and regional employers, WSST ensures the workforce system is impactful and agile, and benefits job seekers and employers alike.

3. Partners Goal – Alignment to Support Career Pathways

Describe local board activities, initiatives, or processes to build the board’s capacity, responsiveness, continuous improvement, and decision-making to:

- support the identification of credentials of value, and
- streamline and clarify existing career pathways and models to increase alignment between secondary and postsecondary technical programs.

Response should address the following:

- system stakeholders' input to assess the alignment and articulation of secondary and postsecondary technical programs supporting career pathways; and
- collaboration with secondary and postsecondary institutions to engage employers to identify credentials of value that respond to local labor market needs, including postsecondary technical sub-baccalaureate credit and non-credit credentials, industry-based certifications, apprenticeship certificates, and licenses; and
- processes to continuously improve career pathways.

The Workforce Solutions for South Texas (WSST) Board is committed to improving career pathway alignment by identifying in-demand skills, certificates, and credentials and improving workforce training models in collaboration with system stakeholders. WSST ensures education and training programs prepare individuals for in-demand career pathways through joint planning and collaboration with secondary and postsecondary institutions, industry partners, and economic development entities.

Alignment with the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan: WSST initiatives align with the Partners System Goal of the Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031 by:

- Strengthening partnerships to identify and promote credentials of value that meet current and projected employer needs.
- Streamlining career pathway models to align secondary and post-secondary programs.
- Establishing continuous improvement processes to ensure career pathways remain relevant and responsive to the labor market.

Board Activities, Initiatives, and Strategies

1. **Stakeholder Engagement for Career Pathway Alignment:** WSST collaborates with education, workforce, and economic development stakeholders to evaluate and enhance career pathway alignment. Key efforts include:

- *Industry Sector Partnerships & Advisory Councils:*
 - Engaging employers in high-demand industries to provide input on the skills, competencies, and credentials needed for regional economic success. (p. 51)
 - Conducting labor market and employer needs assessments to ensure training programs remain aligned to emerging industry demands. (p. 34)
 - Joint planning and coordination with ISDs, community colleges, and universities to assess articulation agreements, dual-credit opportunities, and career pathways. (p. 60)
- *Integration of Workforce and Education Data:*
 - Utilizing Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) labor market data to track workforce trends, credential attainment rates, and employment outcomes. (p. 42)

- Working with secondary and post-secondary institutions to align training program completions with current and projected local hiring needs. (p. 60)
2. **Collaboration with Secondary and Post-secondary Institutions to Identify Credentials of Value:** WSST collaborates with secondary and post-secondary institutions to ensure technical education and training programs provide certificates and credentials that add value for customers and employers. Key initiatives include:
- *Employer Engagement to Identify Credentials of Value:*
 - Partnering with employers to identify and validate industry-based certifications, credentials, and apprenticeships. (p. 50)
 - Facilitating development of new training programs and the expansion of existing programs that lead to stackable, portable credentials in high-demand fields. (p. 50)
 - *Expansion of Dual-Credit and Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs:*
 - Collaborating with Independent School Districts (ISDs), Laredo College, and regional training providers to expand dual-credit and early college programs that provide students with relevant credentials before graduation. (p. 35)
 - Increasing access to Registered Apprenticeship Programs and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs as a bridge to employment and postsecondary education. (p. 36)
 - *Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning Integration:*
 - Engaging Registered Apprenticeships and Industry-Recognized Apprenticeships as service options. (p. 76)
 - Promoting apprenticeship development through Apprenticeship Texas and TWC funding opportunities to local employer partners. (p. 77)
3. **Continuous Improvement Processes for Career Pathway Development:** WSST strives for continuous career pathway improvement to ensure training programs respond to current and emerging employer and labor market needs. Strategies include:
- *Industry and Education Roundtables:*
 - Convening employers, training providers, and educators to review career pathway models, assess credential effectiveness, and make data-driven adjustments. (p. 50)
 - Strengthening industry-advisory partnerships to inform curriculum updates, program expansions, and credential validation efforts. This includes expanding our partnership with Laredo College workforce advisory committees and engaging other institutions in comparable knowledge sharing. (p. 60)
 - *Data-Driven Program Evaluation:*
 - Monitoring program completion, credential and skills attainment rates, and employment outcomes to assess career pathway effectiveness. (p. 42)
 - Using workforce data to adjust investment priorities and expand high-performing programs. (p. 42)

- Data from work-based learning opportunities, both WSST sponsored and through partners such as Laredo College, is analyzed to enhance program effectiveness and adapt opportunities and programs to meet the evolving workforce needs, thereby improving student employability and success. (p. 57)
- *Leveraging Funding for Career Pathway Expansion:*
 - Identifying and pursuing state, federal, and local funding opportunities to promote career pathway development, dual-credit programs, and work-based learning. (p. 77)
 - Prioritizing high-demand sectors and occupations with training investments. (p. 22)

WSST is committed to aligning career pathways with employer needs and expanding credentialing opportunities for learners. Through strategic partnerships with education providers, employers, and stakeholders, WSST continuously strengthens the education-to-career pipeline and ensures sustained economic growth in South Texas.

4. Policy and Planning Goal – Relevant Data Sets WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 21

Describe local board activities, initiatives, or processes that support the availability and coordination of relevant workforce, education, and employment data to evaluate program outcomes to respond to the needs of policy makers and planners to:

- expand high-quality childcare availability,
- identify and quantify quality outcomes, including industry-based certification data, and
- enhance wage records.

Response should address the following:

- engagement with childcare providers and employers to establish on-site or near-site, high quality childcare facilities and expand Texas Rising Star certifications,
- collaboration with employers to identify enhanced employment and earnings data to gain deeper insight into program outcomes, and
- how the board and its system partners identify, evaluate, and implement ways to streamline and improve timeliness and completeness of data matching and sharing, specifically with industry-based certification attainment, to evaluate program effectiveness and outcomes.

The Workforce Solutions for South Texas (WSST) Board is committed to improving workforce policy, planning, and outcomes through effective data collection and analysis. By improving access to and utilization of relevant workforce, education, and employment data sets, WSST strengthens decision-making, program evaluation, and service delivery to better meet the needs of employers, job seekers, and policymakers.

Alignment with the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan: WSST’s initiatives align with the Policy and Planning System Goal of the Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031 by:

1. Expanding high-quality childcare availability to support workforce participation.
2. Improving data collection on credential attainment, industry certifications, and workforce system outcomes.
3. Enhancing wage record analysis (and validation) to track employment and earnings data for program participants.

Board Activities, Initiatives, and Strategies

1. **Expanding High-Quality Childcare Availability:** WSST recognizes that accessible, high-quality childcare is essential for workforce participation and economic stability. We partner with childcare providers, employers, and other childcare system stakeholders to improve childcare services and increase Texas Rising Star (TRS) certifications.
 - *Employer Partnerships to Establish On-Site and Near-Site Childcare:*
 - Engaging employers to promote and support on-site childcare facilities, as well as quality curriculum, as part of workplace benefits packages. (p. 63)
 - Assisting businesses in leveraging state and federal incentives to create near-site childcare centers for working parents. (p. 63)
 - *Expansion of Texas Rising Star (TRS) Certifications:*
 - Providing technical assistance and training to childcare providers to achieve and maintain TRS certification. (p. 64)
 - Partnering with early childhood educators and community stakeholders to promote the critical importance and long-term societal and economic impacts of high-quality childcare in workforce development. (p. 64)
 - *Data-Driven Childcare Planning:*
 - Using labor market data, workforce and child care customer data, and employer surveys to identify childcare deserts and high-need areas. (p. 64)
 - Collaborating with economic development to integrate childcare expansion into regional workforce and economic development strategies. (p. 64)
2. **Identifying and Quantifying Quality Outcomes, Including Industry-Based Certification Data:** WSST tracks and analyzes workforce program outcomes, including attainment of industry-recognized credentials, short-term credentials/certificates, skills gains, employment, and wage gains
 - *Industry Collaboration for Certification Data Collection:*
 - Working with industry partners to identify in-demand certifications and track their impact on hiring and wage growth. (p. 51)
 - Expanding data collection on certificates and non-credit credentials that support career advancement. (p. 51)

- *Improved Data Matching for Certification Attainment:*
 - Collaborating with Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), training providers, and secondary and post-secondary institutions to enhance real-time tracking and data sharing of credential attainment. (p. 35)
 - *Workforce Analytics for Continuous Improvement:*
 - Leveraging TWC, federal labor market analytics, and modeling systems to monitor training program completions, credentialing, and employment outcomes. (p. 38)
3. **Enhancing Wage Record Data to Evaluate Program Effectiveness:** WSST uses wage records, employment, and skills gains tracking for WSST customers to measure long-term workforce success and economic impacts.
- *Employer Engagement to Improve Wage Data Collection:*
 - Partnering with businesses and industry associations to improve availability of employment, wage increase, and career progression data. (p. 45)
 - Utilizing TWC wage record data to track post-training earnings growth and job retention rates. (p. 42)
 - *Streamlining Data Sharing for Program Evaluation:*
 - Working with TWC and employers to improve the accuracy and timeliness of wage data reporting. (p. 45)
 - Strengthening partner collaboration to develop efficient data-sharing practices that improve outcome monitoring. (p. 48)
 - *Using Data to Inform Policy and Program Development:*
 - Providing real-time labor market insights to WSST Board of Directors, partners, educators, and workforce stakeholders. (p. 50)
 - Using data-driven decision-making to align workforce investments with regional economic strategies and priorities. (p. 50)

WSST is dedicated to leveraging data to improve WSST system outcomes, engagement with workforce services, and economic mobility. By strengthening partnerships, expanding childcare access, tracking certification attainment, and enhancing wage record analysis, WSST promotes a more responsive and effective workforce system in South Texas.

Strategic Opportunities

Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031 envisions a collaborative workforce system capable of accelerating the delivery of workforce programs, services, and initiatives to meet the needs of a thriving economy. The strategic opportunities focus system partners on three critical success factors that will lead to broad achievement of the system plan goals and objectives. Review each strategic opportunity and provide the information requested.

Strategic Opportunity 1 – Employer Engagement

Describe how the local board coordinates with its stakeholders to gain insight into the needs of employers and minimize “asks” that burden employers.

Response should address the following:

- coordination efforts that gain more insight from employers, including participation in the Tri-Agency Texas Regional Pathways Network, if applicable, and
- reducing the number of regional system partners individually making requests of employers.

Strategic Opportunity 2 – Improving Outcomes for Texans with Barriers to Employment

Describe how the local board engages Texans with diverse needs — including those with disabilities, foster youth, sex-trafficking victims, incarcerated juveniles and adults, and opportunity youth —by designing programs that address their needs, maximize outcomes, and improve career opportunities.

Response should address the following: WD Letter 11-24, Attachment 1 22

Strategic Opportunity 1, Employer Engagement: WSST has a history of strategic partnership and coordination with regional stakeholders, industry partners, and secondary and post-secondary education providers to streamline employer engagement and minimize duplicative requests.

Employer-Driven Insights & Engagement:

- WSST actively participates in industry sector partnerships and advisory councils to ensure employer needs inform workforce development strategies. (p. 51)
- WSST works with the Tri-Agency Texas Regional Pathways Network to coordinate employer outreach and align workforce training with regional economic priorities. (p. 50)
- Regular employer roundtables, workforce surveys, and labor market assessments help WSST anticipate emerging workforce trends and skills gaps. (p. 50)

Reducing Employer Burden & Duplicative Requests:

- WSST collaborates with economic development organizations, training providers, and education partners to centralize employer engagement efforts. (p. 51)
- The Board co-hosts industry convenings to streamline workforce training discussions and eliminate redundant outreach from multiple stakeholders. (p. 50)
- Employers receive customized workforce solutions through a single point of contact, reducing the administrative burden while ensuring cohesive workforce alignment. (p. 50)

Strategic Opportunity 2, Improving Outcomes for Texans with Barriers to Employment: WSST is dedicated to expanding access to workforce programs that support individuals with barriers to

employment, including individuals with disabilities, foster youth, justice-involved individuals, and survivors of trafficking.

Targeted Workforce Programs & Supportive Services:

- Our integrated service delivery strategies and processes ensure seamless referrals to Adult Education and Literacy (AEL), Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), and community partners that provide complementary supportive services. (p. 42)
- Paid Work Experience and On-the-Job Training programs allow our workforce customers gain practical experience and skills and develop professional networks while earning a wage. (p. 42)
- WSST actively collaborates with *YouthBuild*, *Job Corps*, and *reentry programs* across South Texas to provide specialized employment pathways for opportunity youth and formerly incarcerated individuals. (p. 58)

Work-Based Learning & Second Chance Initiatives:

- Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL), year-round Paid Work Experience (for VR customers) and Disability Job Fairs connect individuals with disabilities to career opportunities. (p. 44)
- Second Chance partnerships with parole and probation offices ensure and community-based organizations justice-involved individuals receive resume assistance, job readiness training, and employer connections. (p. 44)
- WSST provides wraparound support services, including subsidized childcare, transportation, crisis assistance, and intensive career coaching, to reduce barriers to participation and ensure successful job placement. (p. 64)

By leveraging employer partnerships, community collaboration, and data-driven workforce strategies, WSST enhances career opportunities for all South Texans while supporting economic growth in communities across Jim Hogg, Webb, and Zapata counties.